

ARK THE LEGEND

유성 게임 판타지 장편소설
ROK GAME FANTASY STORY

아크더레전드

Silver Star VS Asura

“What on earth?”

Ark looked out the window with a flustered expression. Slayer, Kaya and the team’s expressions weren’t that different. They were all driven to confusion by one spaceship. An unidentified red ship had smashed the ships of the black helmets then leisurely descended.

“Dammit! What else if there? Isn’t our mission to investigate the planet? Some guys appeared to shoot us and the moment we are about to escape, a red ship appeared? Is this a joke? Why are there so many problems for a simple investigation mission?”

Slayer snapped angrily at Ark.

“Why are you such an unlucky bastard?”

“.....You’re blaming me?”

Ark asked with an amazed expression and Slayer nodded naturally.

“Yes! Who else in this party has been as unlucky as you? The fate of the party depends on the leader. We had to meet a leader who is so cheap he doesn’t want to pay the cost of repairing equipment! The evident is that Melina-nim died as soon as we joined your team! We also suffered in the laboratory! Melina-nim is also dead! And those black helmets appeared! I blame you for this!”

“Shut up!”

Kaya kicked Slayer’s ass.

“You know the value of X so why are you whining so much?”

“Value of X.....”

“And why are you assuming that the red ship is an enemy? It smashed the

ship of the black helmets that attacked us. So isn't there a high probability that they are friendly?"

"Haven't you noticed yet?"

The gunner answered Kaya's question. He was the man who defeated to Ark's side.

"Look more carefully. That red ship, doesn't it look a lot different?"

"Different? What, what the?" That disgusting ship?"

Kaya's forehead wrinkled as she turned her head. The red ship was floating a few hundred metres from the Silver Star. It didn't look much different from a general ship. But when the Silver Star's screen zoomed up close to it, there were some parts that looked significantly different. The ship seemed to be made of biological tissue that wriggled like real flesh. It was a ship with mechanical parts and biological tissues combined! That's why Ark and Slayer concluded that the ship was an enemy. Kaya had never been off Istana but Slayer and Ark had fought in the Bellin battlefields. There was only one species that combined mechanical and biological tissues in the entire galaxy!

"That is the ship of the Rama."

"R-rama?"

"In that sense....."

The gunner looked at Ark and said.

"That friend called Slayer's words isn't exactly unfounded. The Rama's ship. In addition, it is red. Doesn't looking at it remind you of a person?"

'Who the hell is this guy?'

Ark narrowed his eyes like a hawk. Ark had felt an awful feeling since the unidentified ship appeared. The word 'ASURA' was carved on the side. He didn't like that name. But the thing that scrapped Ark's nerves even more was the red colour. He didn't dislike the colour red. However it changed when he

was talking about ‘red + Rama.’

The sum of those two words naturally reminded him of someone. But only people who had been on the battlefield like Ark, Slayer, Leon and the Royal Guards were aware of this fact. Kaya and Sadain didn’t know about it yet the gunner did.

‘Where does he know me from?’

His suspicions deepened. However Ark couldn’t think about it for long.

“Hyung-nim, we are receiving communication from the red spaceship!”

“Communication?”

Ark turned his gaze at Hegel’s words. He thought for a moment before nodding and replying.

“Allow the connection.”

A new screen was created on the window and one person appeared. Ark’s face warped the moment he realized the man’s identity. His premonition was correct. The man floating on the screen was who Ark was expecting. The man wearing red armour.....

“The Red Slaughterer!”

-Ark, it’s been a while.

“Why are you here?”

-You’re asking something obvious. Shouldn’t we conclude our fight?

“I don’t care about that. Did you become so confused that there is an error in your memory? You can’t gloss over the fact that it is a draw! Then do you want me to prove it again?”

-It is your idea.

The Red Slaughterer on the screen laughed and replied.

–And I don't care what you think. The important thing is my opinion. And you're one of the reasons I started Galaxian. I can't concentrate on my work until the match with you is settled.

“Your work?”

Ark's eyes narrowed.

“Are you talking about your ultimate goal?”

The Red Slaughterer's lips curved upwards like a bow at Ark's question.

–Didn't I say it before? I'm curious about your skills.

“So I've stepped on you! Let's keep our promise like men.”

–That was your thought?

“This bastard is just like Kurakan!”

Ark frowned and cursed. The listening Kurakan said ‘No Hyung-nim, I'm not like that.....’ However Kurakan's complaining didn't enter Ark's ears.

“This is really convenient for you. You just immediately delete any shameful memories. Indeed, if it's you then it wouldn't be too difficult. You just need to press the Del key several times. An artificial intelligence is upgraded but you're still shameful. If you learned through imitating someone then shouldn't you learn some shame? Red Slaughterer, no Lucifer!”

Lucifer! This was the other name Ark knew the Red Slaughterer as. The identity of the Red Slaughterer was the artificial intelligence made of ‘01010001010.....’ that took over the nuclear power plant and got Ark into Galaxian, Lucifer! Of course this information was a state secret. Therefore openly saying the name Lucifer wasn't a problem. Slayer, Kaya and general users were unaware of Lucifer's existence. He called the name Lucifer without any specific ideas.....

“Lucifer?”

There was a user who reacted violently to that name. It was the gunner who had been observing from a distance.

“And artificial intelligence? Does he had something to do with the Lucifer from New World?”

“Eh? H-how do you?”

Ark was confused by the gunner’s reaction. Once again, Lucifer was the final boss of New World. Ark was the user who defeated Lucifer and became the director of Global Exos. Therefore Ark was a well-known user. But Lucifer’s identity wasn’t just a monster. The fact that he was an artificial intelligence created by Park Woo-seong wasn’t known. It was natural.

The event was caused by the game’s creator trying to destroy it! Some users even fell into a coma because they were caught in the incident. There was no way the game publisher could announce such events. Lucifer had been buried in the darkness until the government’s greed released him. Naturally Lucifer’s real identity wasn’t recorded in Ark’s autobiography. That’s why Ark mentioned artificial intelligence to the Red Slaughterer. It was impossible to connect artificial intelligence to the Lucifer from New World.

Red Slaughterer= Lucifer= artificial intelligence.

It was impossible to realize this formula without knowing the inside facts about New World. The only ones Ark knew who would react to the name Lucifer were the government agents and the 50 gamers the government hired. Then the gunner’s identity.....

“Are you one of those 50 people?”

“One of the 50 people?”

But he just received a question mark in return. That answer was also wrong. Therefore Ark’s brain became even more confused.

‘The level of skill, the way he approached me in the laboratory and his

reaction to Lucifer's name.....if he isn't part of the 50 users then what is this reaction? It isn't like that? Then who is this guy? How does he know about Lucifer?'

“Ark, answer me! What did you say about Lucifer? I clearly heard it. You mentioned the artificial intelligence and Lucifer! That person is clearly associated with Lucifer! And where did the 50 people come from? Tell me! What is going on here? Don't think about moving before you tell me!”

The gunner grabbed Ark's collar.

–Is this the time for small talk?

The Red Slaughterer said with a laugh. Then Hegel cried out in a desperate voice.

“Hyung-nim, attack! Shells are heading towards the Silver Star!”

“What?”

Ark suddenly raised his head. Dozens of lights could be seen on the window.

–Now Ark, it is the beginning of the 2nd round.

The Red Slaughterer disappeared from the screen with a laugh.

Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng!

-You have received enemy fire!

<The durability of Silver Star's shield has decreased to 95%>

-You have received enemy fire!

<The durability of Silver Star's shield has decreased to 91%>

And the red messages flashed on the screen. As soon as the bombardment from the Asura was confirmed, Milan immediately opened the shield and started evasion movements. But the shells caught up with the Silver Star's movements and the shells hit them. At the same time, sparks flew from the Silver Star's shields!

“Heok! Why is the shield falling so quickly?”

“It is EMP shells!”

“EMP? Damn, he is very determined.”

Ark cursed with an annoyed look. Just like Galaxian had different types of bullets for firearms like the Freezing and Flame Bullets, the shells for the ship's guns also existed in a variety of different types. The EMP shells emitted an electromagnetic pulse that could inflict deadly damage to shields or equipment. Air battles were often decided by how quickly the enemy's shield could be removed.

When considering that point, the EMP shells dealt two times the damage of a general shell to the shield so it was the optimal weapon for air battles. However, the price of the EMP shells was double the price of general ones! It was like they were shooting chunks of money. The ship shook and flashing lights occurred on the bridge.

“Damn Ark, you should do something!”

And the passengers like Slayer started complaining.

“Hey! Don't you really the atmosphere? We'll talk about it later!”

Ark pushed the gunner away and sat in the captain's seat with his eyes glued to the monitor.

Ship's Basic Information: Silver Star

Hull: Medium-3 Classification: Battleship

Firepower: 25,000

Speed: B Turning: A

Shield: C Energy Efficiency: B

* Defense: Shield Gauge: 86%

Hull Armour Durability: 100%

* Attack: Gun (Thunderbolt) Charge Rate: 100% (4 shots available)

Bullets for Manual Shooting- Full, Condensation Energy Particle
Cannon Charge Rate- 100%

* Special: [Optical Scanners x 15], [Chaff x 5]

* Skill: [Photon Movement], [Warp Navigation]

This was the Silver Star's information window when it switched to battle mode!

“Shall we do this?”

Ark browsed the information window before shouting to Milan.

“Milan, increase the engine output and use irregular movements to evade!”

“I'm already doing that! But the accuracy of their bombardment is beyond imagination! They're hitting 50% of the time despite my evasion movement at top speed!”

“They must be using the automatic targeting system.”

Ark looked at Hegel and shouted.

“The Chaff is ready! Make the Silver Star fly in a 1 km circle. Hegel, prepare to launch the Chaff in 30 second intervals!”

“Understood!”

The Silver Star accelerated and made a huge circle over Impeltus. All ships had gravity devices so the crew members didn't feel any change in despite the angle of movement. But if they ship turned 360 degrees while accelerating then Slayer, Kaya and the Royal Guards would lose their balance. However Hegel just checked the stopwatch and pressed the launch button in rapid succession.

“Chaff launched!”

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

Silver capsules exited the upper doors of the Silver Star and exploded! In moments the Chaff (in order to disrupt radar detection) scattered around the Silver Star. Then the shells that had been concentrating on the Silver Star started flying all over the place.

‘It is good that I've learnt this.’

He had spent 4 days in S-20 before joining the team. This was one of the reasons why Ark had been busy. It was likely that a fleet battle would occur on this mission. But Ark didn't have experience in this.

He had experienced aerial combat in New World but that was completely different from a large scale fleet battle. This time he wouldn't have Tori to control the Silver Star so he needed to learn about ways to win fleet battles. This was the defense method he learnt!

Originally Chaff was an equipment used to disturb the radar of guided missiles. But the automatic targeting system also predicted the movement of the enemy using radar. This was the reason why the Asura's high accuracy shells suddenly flew to an unexpected place. The Chaff covered a 1 kilometre area so the radar of the automatic targeting system failed to detect the Silver Star. The passengers gave thumbs up when the constant hits stopped..

“Ohh! Ark, great! Great!”

“Now Kalliben, Leon! Shoot!”

The Silver Star’s radar wasn’t operating normally thanks to the Chaff but the turrets were set to manual mode. Before the Asura showed up, the enemy was just a ship without power. He didn’t need to use the auto-targeting function. Fortunately they could start manually shooting without any preparation!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The Silver Star’s turrets starting firing. The difference between the Silver Star and the Asura was 1 kilometre. It wasn’t a close distance but the Asura was confident from their pre-emptive strike and didn’t feel the need for evasive movements. In other words, it was a stationary target. And the people sitting at the Silver Star’s turret were Leon and Kalliben who had a natural talent as a sniper!

Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng!

Sparks sprung from the Asura’s shield. The Asura started its evasion movements one step late but the speed and turning power was slow compared to the Silver Star. But it was a Rama battleship so the Asura possessed tremendous firepower. Unlike the Silver Star that had turrets on each wing, the Asura had a total of 4 turrets. They didn’t dare use the expensive EMP shots so they switched to manual shooting mode.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Pepeng! Pepeng!

-You have received enemy fire!

<The durability of Silver Star’s shield has decreased to 32%>

-You have received enemy fire!

<The durability of Silver Star's shield has decreased to 27%>

The firefight continued for 5 minutes. The shield's durability had fallen below 30% so the shield turned red. But the Asura's shield had also turned red. The Asura was definitely ahead in firepower. But the Silver Star was superior in manoeuvrability and turning power.

'The battle isn't just decided by the performance of the equipment!'

It was the user's capabilities that determined victory or defeat! The same went for a fleet battle. It was useless to have an excellent ship unless it could be used properly. The outcome would be determined by the crew's competence in handling the ship. That's why the Silver Star could overwhelm the Asura despite have inferior firepower.

Leon and Kalliben were a user and NPC specialized in shooting so their hit rate was higher. But the person who had the biggest impact on the battle wasn't Kalliben and Leon or Ark who was commanding. The person with the largest impact on overwhelming the Asura.....

"The trajectory of the shells has been predicted! The current position of the Asura, the enemy's turning radius, angle of the turrets and its limits, the turret's firing rate has all been calculated. 12 seconds after firing, the lowest point the enemy ship can fly is in the 3:05 direction from its current position. 15 degrees to 70 metres!"

The black eyes watching the monitor without blinking! The fingers that typed in complex operations on the keyboard!

"The performance of the enemy ship Asura has been identified. Speed and turning ability, braking power, expected route of the ship and movement of the turrets has been uploaded to your monitor!"

Once again, the shells had to fly over a 1 kilometre distance. There were also

dozens of shells at once! In fact, it was impossible to look at the shells with their eyes and avoid it. The best way to avoid enemy fire was to predict the attack and use evasion movement in order to reduce the probability of a hit. It was true with the shells as well.

It was difficult to have a high hit rate with the enemy ships moving erratically. Therefore it was necessary to predict the avoidance movement and shoot. In this sense, the prediction was more important than the pilot or the capabilities of the shells. No, the pilot performance, ability of the shooters and prediction were all elements that increased performance by x2, or even x3!

The person with the main role in Ark's team was Hegel! The Silver Star was able to gain an advantage in the firefight exchanged over a 1 kilometre area because of Hegel with Ark's back-up. After the battle continued for a long time.

“M-Messenger-nim, I-I.....weeeeek!”

The sharp acceleration caused the team to tumble into each other as one solid mass!

“Why are you covering us in vomit in such a situation?”

“Ugh! C-covered! This delicate woman's face is covered in vomit!”

“Ugh! T-the smell.....I'm at my limit.....weeeeek!”

A chain reaction started as Slayer and Kaya also started to vomit!

‘That's it! If nothing unusual happens then this will be my victory!’

Ark looked at the Asura on the screen and clenched his fist. Finally the shield protecting the Asura was struck and shattered. A ship without a shield was no different from a knight with no armour! There was even more.

Pepeng!

Smoke soared from the rear of the Asura. The Asura's movements stopped

like its brakes were jammed.

‘It is clear that there is a problem with the engine!’

Ark sensed that he was on the verge of victory. Ark looked at the Asura before turning to Hegel and shouting.

“Hegel, calculate the Asura’s blind spot!”

“All gun turrets are located on the upper and lower parts and it can fire in a 360 degree angle! But the thickness is 100 metres so there is an angle where the turrets can’t aim at!”

“Milan, did you hear?”

Ark exclaimed as he looked at the front window.

“Engines to their maximum output! Turn to the right to avoid their attacks and rush to that side!”

The Silver Star rapidly turned over at Ark’s command. It accelerated and rushed towards the Asura spewing smoke!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

When the Silver Star rushed, the Asura’s 4 turrets fired EMP shots. Each hit made holes in the Silver Star’s shield and flames surged out. The ship kept on shaking as it was continuously hit. However Ark just stared at the Asura on the screen.

“Yet! Yet....”

After a while. The vibration disappeared. The monitors flashing on the Silver Star indicated that it had entered the area that the Asura’s turrets couldn’t hit. The upper and lower turrets shot diagonally, causing one blind spot underneath the Asura.

“Leon, Kalliben, now!”

Ark stood up and shouted.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The Silver Star's turrets started firing. The Silver Star had entered an area 100 metres from the Asura! The red armour of the Asura instantly became tattered from the shells. The biological tissue also spouted a red slime that looked like blood.

"This will determine it! Prepare the gun!"

"The gun....."

Hegel was moving his hands quickly when he suddenly flinched and stopped. He hurriedly checked the dashboard before shouting.

"Hyung-nim, an energy reaction! A tremendous amount of energy is gathering on the Asura! Gun! Those guns are preparing to launch their main gun!"

"Main gun?"

Ark turned his head with surprise. The Silver Star had come close to the Asura so its vision was limited. Therefore he hadn't realized it until Hegel's words but particles of light were clearly gathering at the Asura. The focused particles of light seemed black to any users looking at it. It meant all the energy necessary for the main gun was gathered.

'Don't tell me?'

He felt an eerie chill down his spine. Ark reflexively shouted.

"Milan! Rapid descent!"

The Asura then started rotating. The light flashed in a cone shape with the Asura's movement.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The light caused a white glare as it flew through the sky!

'We were deceived! I thought it was incapacitated! They determined that

ranged shooting was detrimental and lured us closer using the guise that the engine failed!’

That was the identity of the eerie chill. The main gun was more destructive than the smaller shells but it needed time to charge so enemy ships could often sense it and avoid it. But the Red Slaughterer lured Ark in and created an opportunity to use the main gun.

‘A direct hit from that.....’

If Hegel hadn’t detected the energy being focused then the Silver Star would’ve suffered a fatal blow it couldn’t recover from. But he was too late. The main gun had been ready to launch by the time Hegel detected the energy. They flew down 100 metres but it was impossible to avoid any damage.

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa! Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

-The shield has been completely destroyed by enemy fire!

<Once destroyed then the shield can’t recover during combat. 30 minutes in a non-combat state needs to pass before the shield’s durability will recover. The shield’s recovery rate will depend on its performance>

-Part of the right wing has been ruptured by enemy fire!

<Depending on the damage received during battle, the hull can either be damaged, ruptured or destroyed. If the damage is low and there is only a functional problem than it can self-recover depending on the level of the ship. The rupture of the hull means that the function is seriously compromised and it needs to be repaired directly. If the part is completely destroyed then it is best to go to the nearest repair shop. An engineer in the crew with expertise in repair can fix it but spare parts are required>

* Right Wing Rupture: Hull mobility -30%, Turning power -50%

The message appeared on the Silver Star's window after it violently vibrated! The right wing had been grazed by the white flash and smoke was emerging from it.

“Oh my god! This is.....”

Ark's face turned dark.

The Silver Star had been ahead in the battle against the Asura. But now its wing was damaged and the manoeuvrability and turning power was lower than the Asura's. The Silver Star had inferior firepower so it was a literal death sentence!

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

Then the ship shook again. Ark had desperately made the ship descend to avoid the main gun's attacks but that put them in the range of the lower turrets. With the shells pouring from above, columns of flames emerged from the Silver Star's armour and pits formed in it.

“Hyung-nim, the durability of the upper armour has fallen below 50%! At this rate it won't last for even 1 minute! Let's leave at full speed!”

“No!”

Ark raised his head and exclaimed. The results wouldn't change even if the escaped beyond the Asura's lower turrets. The Silver Star had already lost manoeuvrability and turning power. The Asura's shells had only hit the Silver Star for a brief moment before an idea came to Ark's head. And he came to a conclusion!

“Milan, lift the nose of the Silver Star!”

Ark commanded and Milan tugged the joystick. The Silver Star's nose started rising. And the moment the Asura's bottom hull was reflected in the front window!

“Charge!”

Ark grinded his teeth together and shouted. Milan's expression was saying 'Huh? Why?' and 'No, that's a bit.....' as he hesitated. But the Royal Guards absolutely obeyed Ark's command! Milan only hesitated for 0.1 second after hearing Ark's command before accelerating.

And.....ku ku ku ku! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The Silver Star crashed into the Asura. There was a huge vibration as the Silver Star crashed into the ship and produced an explosion.

-You have collided with the enemy battleship and the Silver Star's armour has been destroyed!

<The main gun Thunderbolt can't be used until it is repaired>

That message popped up! It was the inevitable result.

'If we don't stand a chance anyway then I'd rather repay.....'

But Ark's eyes were turned towards the Silver Star. Ark was looking at the hull of the Asura that the Silver Star was lodged in. The part of the Silver Star that crashed was completely crushed. Naturally the hull of the Asura wasn't safe. No, if he only looked at the collision area than the Asura received larger damage. They had driven the Silver Star several metres inside the biological tissue. However Ark hadn't sacrificed the main gun for just that. The Silver Star had slammed into the rear of the Asura. It was the place with the engine.

'.....I've taken the bone!'

This was what Ark had aimed for. The Silver Star lost its main gun in this collision but the Asura was deprived of its engine. A spaceship losing an engine was like a warrior losing a foot. If it couldn't move than the 4 turrets were meaningless. He had overcome the moment of crisis and reversed the situation!

'The Red Slaughterer. You certainly made me scared for a little bit this time.

But you can't win against me even if you are a supercomputer that can accomplish hundreds of millions of calculations in seconds. I am Ark. Your calculations won't work against me. I'll make you aware of that fact from now on.'

"The Asura's engine has been stopped. Milan, move the Silver Star to the Asura's dead zone. This time I'm going to break the Asura and the Red Slaughterer!"

Ark commanded with a grin.

-Ugh! This bastard!

On the gleaming bridge inside the Asura. The Red Slaughterer cursed as he looked at the rear of the Asura spewing smoke. Once again, the Asura had used a trick to lure Ark closer. The Asura was losing in the air battle with the Silver Star. The Red Slaughterer determined that it would be hard to win in a ranged fight and deliberately set off a bomb to stage an engine breakdown.

'The meat is given so take the bone!'

At first the Red Slaughterer thought it was his victory. The Silver Star came up to the Asura's flank. In the meantime he made the energy concentrate on the main gun and launched it!

'Unfortunately it didn't sink.....'

The Red Slaughterer was sure of his victory as he watched the Silver Star's wing get damaged. They avoided the direct hit but the Silver Star lost their manoeuvrability and turning power. The Asura's firepower was superior so it was only a matter of time until the Silver Star sank! He really couldn't imagine what happened next. Ark crashed into the Asura's rear. The result was.....

-The enemy's attack has destroyed the engine!

<The Asura can't move until repairs have been completed>

Engine destruction!

-He really is a reckless guy.

Keiko shook his head and muttered.

-He managed to come up with such a solution with 4 turrets aiming at him. He really is frightening.

-It's not surprising since he is Ark.

The Red Slaughterer answered with an unpleasant expression. Then Ark moved to the Asura's blind spot so the Red Slaughterer was forced to suffer helplessly as the ship was bombarded. However the Red Slaughterer didn't look panicked at all. Rather, there was a pale smile on his face.

-That was certainly a nasty attack. But Ark is mistaken about the two most important things. The Asura isn't a battleship because of its firepower and I have no intention of winning against them in a firefight.

-And his ship is under the Asura.

-I won't hesitate this time.

The Red Slaughterer said with a grin.

And he shouted towards his crew.

-Release the howling stingers and capture the enemy ship before it escapes our range!

Tutung! Tutung! Tutung!

The Asura's lower deck opened and 6 red tentacles extended from the

biological tissue. The tentacles were thousands of red muscle fibres weaved together to form a 1 metre thick strand! The tentacles stretched out like a hand towards the Silver Star and grabbed it tightly.

–You didn’t recognize it. You had the upper hand in the fleet battle. But this game isn’t something to be decided with a firefight. This is the 2nd round so we have to decide it with our swords!

The Red Slaughterer turned his body and shouted.

-Red Front, be ready! The real battle is starting now!

“What, what the? This is?”

Ark looked out the window with confused eyes. He was sure of the Silver Star’s victory when 6 tentacles suddenly stretched from the Asura and embedded into the Silver Star. The situation then became even more absurd.

“Hyung-nim, the steering key doesn’t work!”

“Electronic corrosion! The enemy ship is spreading electronic corrosion through the tentacles to the Silver Star!”

Following Milan’s words, Hegel shouted in a desperate voice.

“Electronic corrosion?”

“A powerful EMP jamming signal is being sent to the Silver Star through the tentacles! As a result, 80% of the Silver Star’s electronics have been jammed!”

“Dammit! How do we stop it?”

“Analysis of the electronic corrosion signal will allow me to neutralize it. But the analysis of the signal then combining the signals to neutralize it will take at least 30 minutes. Another way to stop the electronic erosion more quickly....”

“Cut it off.”

That was the simplest way. Cut the tentacles sending the signal. Ark considered the situation before turning around and shouting.

“Ya! Everybody wake up! Do I need to explain the situation? The time to show your value has come!”

“Uhh! How can I move in this state?”

Slayer who was a shabby figure in the corner said with a pained look. Unlike Ark, Hegel and Milan who had been tightly seat-belted, Slayer, Kaya, Sadain and the other Royal Guards had rolled around from the acrobatics during the firefight with the Asura until their stomachs became upset and they started to vomit. But he didn’t care about that situation.

“Put it aside and move quickly! We need to break all those tentacles before those guys do something else! Hegel, open the upper doors for me!”

Ark shouted from the central deck. The upper doors opened and a rough storm briefly occurred.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Sparks were rising from the upper doors. The Asura have 4 gun turrets. Two on the upper part and two on the lower part. The Asura was pouring shells from the lower turrets while the tentacles were holding the Silver Star in place. Of course, there was no intention of being hit.

“Leon! Kalliben!”

-I know!

-I’ll cover you!

Leon and Kalliben replied over the Nymphe. The turrets attached to the Silver Star rotated until they were 90 degrees. There was a ringing sound as the shells shot upwards! Kalliben and Leon aimed at the lower turrets and started counterattacking. The distance was only dozens of meters. There were

no shields and the ships couldn't move so the results of the bombardment was obvious. Sparks flew every time there was a roar from the turrets on both sides and smoke started to rise.

‘Dammit! They have 4 turrets.....!’

The repair fee was rapidly increasing. Ark was more worried about the repair fee than Leon and Kalliben's safety but he didn't have the time to worry about it. The chances of the Silver Star escaping whole had flown away a long time ago.

“Concentrate your firepower on a nearby tentacle!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Snap!

Flames soared as dozens of shells shot across the space. Red, viscous liquid flew every time the shell hit the tentacle. A tentacle became ragged and finally broke from Ark, Ellain and Sadain's combined attacks.

“That's it! Another one! The rest....”

“Hyung-nim, over there!”

Kurakan shouted from behind him and pointed up. When he raised his head, the Asura's lower doors had opened and 10 people were descending towards the Silver Star. They were Rama warriors wearing parachutes. And the lead Rama warrior wearing red armour.....

“The Red Slaughterer!”

Descent!

Kurung! Kurung! Ku ku ku ku!

Purple clouds swirled in the skies of Impeltus. Incandescent lights and lightning strikes intermittently flashed through the sky and revealed 2 huge objects. It was the Asura and the Silver Star! Right now the tentacles had grabbed the Silver Star and 10 Rama warriors were falling from the Asura towards the Silver Star. An intense amount of bullets were pouring down as well!

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

“Everybody down! Sword Defense! ”

Ark rushed away from his team members and wielded his lightsaber. The blue light drew a complex pattern in the air as the bullets spread in different directions. A similar scene was occurring dozens of metres away.

“The guy is the leader!”

“Huhuhu! Okay! I’ll show those Rama the power of the M-620!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Hedro and Kurakan started shooting their guns at the Red Slaughterer’s head. But like Ark, the Red Slaughterer swung his lightsaber and the bullets scattered all over the place. Sword Defense used the electromagnetic property of the lightsaber to change the trajectory of the bullets. Once again, the Red Slaughterer had been the originator of the skill and Ark learnt it from him.

“Don’t waste bullets!”

Ark looked back at the team and shouted. There were 20 Rama warriors over the deck of the Silver Star including the Red Slaughterer. On the other hand, Ark’s team only had 8 people. Of course they weren’t ordinary soldiers. Slayer, Sadain and Kaya’s skills were first class while Kurakan had good

equipment. Ellain was also an NPC with a higher level than Ark.

‘Even if we’re outnumbered, we won’t be easily pushed.....’

The opponents weren’t sloppy guys. The Rama warriors that descended were the Red Slaughterer’s personal troops, the Red Front! They were notorious on the battlefields in the Bellin constellation. If they numbered double Ark’s team than he couldn’t guarantee the odds. No, he was certainly at a disadvantage.

‘First it was imperative to reduce the numbers!’

“Don’t worry about the Red Slaughterer! Attack the other guys! Their bullets are limited at that range. So concentrate on hitting their parachutes!”

The target changed to the Red Slaughterer’s henchman after Ark’s command. Of course, they weren’t waiting for the bullets politely either. They used the jet equipment on the parachutes to avoid the attacks and fired back. However soldiers firing from the top compared to those firing from the bottom. The result was obvious.

“Ark!”

“Hyung-nim, I’m coming out!”

Leon and Kalliben escaped from the gun turrets.

Tutung! Tutung! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Once Leon and Kalliben started shooting, sparks flew from the parachutes of 5 Rama warriors. One person flew in the wrong direction and crashed into Impeltus’ mountains and exploded. The remaining Rama warriors who witnessed the death of their colleague cast away their flaming parachutes and jumped.

“Now Ellain, Sadain!”

Ark shot forward like a bullet. He flew towards the Rama warriors falling on the deck and wielded his sword!

“Sonic Sword!”

The Rama warriors were pushed back by the shock wave before they could regain their posture and was thrown off the deck. Ellain followed behind Ark and used the same skill to push them off the deck. Meanwhile Sadain didn't have any skills so he took more time but he also took care of a warrior. The deck was hundreds of metres in the air so there was no need to check the result once they were pushed out.

‘Those fellows are taken care of!’

Ark spun around and looked at the deck. And not far away another Rama warrior was falling! Ark once again flew forward like a bullet. The moment he was dashing across the upper deck of the Silver Star! A red shape fell in front of him.

Snap! Chwajijijijik!

Red sparks exploded!

–That's enough Ark! I'm also here!

The sparks occurred from when he hit the red armour. It was the Rama's battle suit that felt no different from insect skin! He remembered that battle suit. Like the Asura, this red battle suit belonged to the Red Slaughterer! Ark looked at his determined expression and smiled.

“You're late. I got bored waiting so I killed several guys.”

–I liked those subordinates.

“I'm sorry.”

–There is no need to apologize. You'll be killed soon.

“Who? Me? That's impossible. I have no intention of dying.”

–You should do that. It's not worth killing you if you just die politely.

“I'm just asking out of curiosity but do you really not remember? Or are you

pretending not to remember? Although it is different if you're made of electronic thoughts. Maybe if your memory keeps on being deleted than you won't remember to go after the ultimate goal anymore. I'll just continued beating you up until your memory flies away."

–No, one experience was enough. Of course....

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Then bullets flew from both sides. The bullets flying from behind Ark were Kalliben and Leon aiming at the Red Slaughterer. The bullets shot from the other side were from the Red Front landing on the deck of the Silver Star. Both Ark and the Red Slaughterer moved. Flames rose from the two people! The Red Slaughterer moved back like he was sliding on ice.

–.....The result will be my victory! Detection!

"Don't talk about a dream you can't fulfil! Sonic Sword!"

Red and blue lights clashed in the air and exploded. Sparks flew up and fell to the deck. No, it was caught in the blast and scattered in all directions. It was the Red Slaughterer who caused the blast that blew across the deck! Ark rushed towards the Red Slaughterer from the opposite side.

–Dragon Fury!

The red sword extended like a laser! The red light shot forward at the speed of light and cut through Ark's neck. Ark's body crumpled into fine pieces and scattered. Then 4 other Arks laughed.

"You've been standing still. If you want revenge then you should come up with some new techniques."

–This is.....alter ego?

"That's correct. Khafra Fencing 3rd style! Galaxy Sword!"

The voice was heard from behind the Red Slaughterer! Dozens of blue swords surged like a tidal wave and rotated around the Red Slaughterer's

body. And the moment the wildly swirling swords were about to strike the body!

-This is impossible! Blood Sword!

Dozens of red lights floated above the Red Slaughterer's head. The red lights changed into long points and flew towards the blue swords. It was the Red Slaughterer's wide area attack Blood Sword!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Just like Galaxian Sword swirled like a typhoon, Blood Sword created dozens of red swords! There was a chain explosion as dozens of red and blue swords clashed and an electromagnetic storm occurred. Then a message popped up on the Nymphé!

-#%\$\$##\$\$#\$#\$
%####\$!

The electromagnetic storm caused the Nymphé to malfunction.

-Not yet! You'll need more power than that to take me down!

The Red Slaughterer roared while approaching.

"That's what I intend!"

A low voice said from the other side of the electromagnetic storm. A warrior clad in armour appeared in the midst of the heavy smoke. This was Ark's battle suit, the Hyper Drone. A pair of eyes shining from the sleek, streamlined helmet moved towards the Red Slaughterer.

"I will remind you. Why you couldn't beat me."

"This is....."

"It is impossible to aim."

Kurakan and Leon mumbled with stupid expressions. Their eyes were fixed to the centre of the deck where the Red Slaughterer was facing Ark. They called it a deck but the Silver Star was basically a long, cylindrical fuselage aircraft. The deck had a gentle slope while the outer walls curved like a pipe. Furthermore Kurakan had to clean the ship when it was docked at S-20 and there wasn't one day where he didn't slip. But the state of the deck didn't seem to affect Ark and the Red Slaughterer at all.

Snap! Kwajijiji! Pepeng! Pepeng! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The shine of the swords that clashed without any breaks! It was difficult to even see the two wielding the sword. The only way they could tell there was a sword encounter was the sparks flying. They couldn't support Ark at all.

“There is no need to interrupt.”

Then the gunner approached and said.

“At that standard there is no meaning in having the support of their teammates. Any cover fire would instead be a disturbance. And we're not in the position to be so leisurely. Those guys didn't come down to watch the fight.”

The gunner's eyes turned towards the soldiers gathered near them. The Red Front had managed to land thanks to the Red Slaughterer blocking Ark. They had cast off their parachutes and were moving forward in formation.

“You're not wrong but....”

Slayer looked at the gunner with dissatisfied eyes.

“How do we know you're not going to support the enemy? I don't know what Ark is thinking but I hate you! Your colleague in the black helmet killed Melina-nim!”

“I was just giving you advice before it becomes difficult here.”

“I don't like that attitude!”

“Slayer!”

Then Leon’s voice was heard from behind. The Red Front passed the area where Ark and the Red Slaughterer were engaged in the centre of the deck. They didn’t want to start a crude battle and accidentally damage the Red Slaughterer. But a wide space had formed on the opposite side of where they were fighting. At the same time, grenades started to fly to where Ark’s team was waiting.

“There is nowhere to run away!”

“Ohh! Leave it to me! Iron Castle!”

Slayer popped forward and lifted his shield. Slayer and Leon hadn’t just been killing time until they met up with Ark again. They had also steadily adventured and raised their levels and skills. Slayer especially focused on defensive skills. He desperately needed defense skills because Melina was a healer. Thus the skill Iron Castle was born! When the skill was used, two shields were created. The 3 shields forming a line side-by-side had the same effects.

“Bring on the grenades!”

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

The grenades collided with the shield and exploded. Slayer looked at the gunner and laughed.

“How is it, my defense technique? The grenades.....cough! What, what the? This smoke?”

Smoke emerged from the grenades that collided with the shields.

“This isn’t a grenade! Smoke bombs!”

“S-smoke bombs? Dammit! These bastards.....”

“Slayer, above you!”

“What? Eek?”

Slayer lifted his eyes at those words but it was too late. Four small objects were flying in an arc over the shields! In fact, the most hated weapon of shield users were grenades. Unlike the bullets that flew straight, the grenades could fly in an arc so it was difficult to block with a shield. Therefore troopers or snipers normally stopped the enemy grenades before they were thrown. However the grenades had been blocked by the smoke bomb so Leon and Kalliben didn't notice. And just as the grenades were over the shields!

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

4 shots rang out! At that moment, the 4 grenades exploded in the air at roughly the same time.

“What, what the? The grenades flying in the air.....”

Slayer stared with a puzzled expression. And behind him in the same posture as a western movie was the gunner holding a pistol! Slayer stared at the gunner holding the pistol before scratching his head with an embarrassed look.

“Eh? T-thank you.”

“Don't pay attention to it. I'm still not your colleague.”

“What? T-this bastard! I really hate you!”

Slayer yelled angrily. But the gunner wasn't interested in Slayer's affection (?). He just turned his head and shouted.

“They used the smoke bombs so they will start the assault soon! The space is limited so we can't escape the scope of the smoke bombs! All troopers should turn on your infrared scopes, stay behind the tentacles and prepare for a shoot-out! Warriors like Slayer should get ready for combat!”

“I won't listen to your orders! And why do you want the troopers to prepare for a shoot-out? It doesn't add up!”

“You mean me?”

The gunner turned and asked. Then a Rama warrior jumped through the smoke holding a dagger in both hands. The gunner's hands moved like lightning. He moved the pistol from side to side and pulled the trigger. The 2 shots were so fast they seemed to be fired at the same time but the surprising thing was the accuracy. When the gunfire rang out, both of the Rama warrior's wrists were hit and fresh blood splattered. He pierced through the wrists of the dagger wielding enemy without any errors. Then the pistol was rotated again and fired at the Rama warrior's gaping chest.

Tatatatang!

It was like a machine gun was being launched! This was possible because of the pistol's special nature. In general, automatic pistols had a defined firing rate. But the gunner used a manual revolver pistol. The manual pistol's firing rate depended on the speed that the trigger was pulled. A manual pistol was inferior to the automatic pistol in many ways. But depending on the ability of the user, a firing rate similar to a machine gun could be achieved.

-Kuheok!

“I feel more comfortable in close combat.”

The gunner said as he quickly reloaded the pistol. The moment he aimed his muzzle at the stumbling Rama warrior! Another Rama warrior ran through the smoke screen and twisted a dagger. The gunner moved his upper body to avoid it and turned his muzzle. He followed up with successive gunshots. However the Rama moved to the side to avoid the bullets before lifting the machine gun in his left hand. The gunner made the pistol revolve and fired at the machine gun handle before pulling the trigger again.

Tang tang tang! Tu tu tu tu! Tang tang tang! Tu tu tu tu!

Dozens of shots fired in a few seconds. The Rama warrior that was entangled with the gunner smirked.

-When did you start your close distance marksmanship? It is like when I met Ark's team.....there is a considerable amount of skill. Ark's subordinates might be amateurs but they are respectable warriors. But the most wonderful thing is the capabilities that seem to expand when they meet the enemy. I have to concede that Ark is a good leader. I am the Commander of the Red Front, Keiko so your opponent isn't lacking.

“Why do you need to make a reason for fighting?”

The gunner murmured as his bullet casings dropped to the ground. And he kicked the large bullet casings on the ground before rushing to Keiko.

“Bullet Storm!”

Ta ta tang! Ta ta tang! Ta ta tang!

-Excuse me. I originally didn't have such a character.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Keiko avoided the large bullet casings and fired his machine gun. The battle between the gunner and Keiko wasn't the only one. 10 Rama warriors had started flocking through the smoke screen so Ark's team divided to the side and started to engage them.

-Barbarian's Fang!

“Welcome to the alter ego! Sonic Sword!”

As expected, the person with the most prominent skill in the Royal Guards was the strongest Kusan warrior Ellain. He might've wandered around lost for a while but now he had completely adapted to fighting with the life support equipped! The strongest Kusan warrior overwhelmed and pushed back the Red Front. However Ark's team also had powerful users.

“Armed Lightning Spear!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa! Pajijiji!

Among them, one user that captured a lot of attention was Sadain. He wore his battle suit as soon as the fight commenced. He used his lightning spear to face 5 Rama warriors at once yet showed no signs of being pushed. Of course, it wasn't just Sadain.

Tutung! Tu tu tu tu! Tutung!

The troopers used the tentacles as cover and started pouring out bullets. In close combat there was a considerable interval when fighting with a spear so the troopers covered for that interval with their gunfire. The battle suit clad Leon also used bullets with the push effect to cover his allies and fight the enemy!

“Super Magnetic Shot!”

Leon played a key role in tilting the battle against the Rama warriors to their side. The special effect of Kaya's battle suit also couldn't be ignored. Espers could buy battle suits that produced a similar effect to Esper skills. Kaya's battle suit was like that. The performance was lower than other battle suits but....

“Armour armament!”

Kaya activated her armour at the same time. Kaya's body floated in the air and particles of light concentrated around her.

-The gene activated Esper battle suit Optisian has been triggered.

Optisian was made with the power of a strong spirit. The wearer's genes will be activated to its limits and the body's capabilities will be amplified. This effect will be applied to the wearer and all colleagues through mental exchange. However, if two Optisian activates in the same party then only the stronger effect will be applied.

<The attack and defense of everybody in the party will increase by 15%>

Kaya's battle suit gave a buff effect to the entire party. The strengthening effect was lower compared to other battle suits but it was still UP! It even had an exclusive skill.

“Bio Tornado!”

A storm of mental energy swirled around Kaya! The Rama warriors caught in the storm had parts of their body turn strange. Bio Tornado caused a storm of intense mental waves that confused the enemy's DNA. Some had their nose disappear or increased by three, others had arms growing from the back of their head, missing legs or even deadly mutations.

Of course, the Rama warriors didn't take it lying down. They were the strongest Rama warriors who reigned over the Bellin battlefields with the Red Slaughterer! They hadn't gained that reputation for nothing. They were equal to Kaya, Sadain and Leon but they were overwhelming to the Royal Guards! The Rama warriors including Keiko also had battle suits.

-Armour armament!

The Rama warriors equipped their battle suits!

Pepeng! Pepeng! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The battle became even more violent.

Wiing! Woong! Woong! Wiing!

The swords were raising a storm. A blade of wind occurred whenever the sword cut through the air and a storm swirled. Once that vortex disappeared, another one would occur and this repeated over and over. The storm of hot air had an infinite(∞) cycle! It wasn't just one vortex. While bullets and blades were relentlessly crossing the Silver Star, the red and blue light in the centre clashed and made two narrow hurricanes.

Pajik! Pajik! Pajik! Pajijijiji!

Sparks flew everywhere! Dozens of storms seemed to occur at the same time like a shotgun explosion. Pain shot through the hands holding the sword each time. This didn't mean that the enemy's sword was faster but that it dealt a fatal blow!

–You've become a little better than last time.

The Red Slaughterer's voice was heard from the other side of the flying sparks. Ark twisted his lips and declared sharply.

“That's good seeing as last time I won.”

–I don't think so.

“I'm sorry. You don't think I won?”

He questioned the Red Slaughterer's words. If Ark looked back at that time, he was inferior to the Red Slaughterer in all aspects including level, equipment and skill. Therefore Ark had abandoned the losing battle and lured the Red Slaughterer into a trap before blowing him up. Perhaps that was why the Red Slaughterer couldn't admit defeat. Because it wasn't in sword skills. However Ark never considered himself cowardly.

–I need to desperately figure out a way to win!

And he did win! Ark thought it was fair. The power of words was the ability to have different meanings. Knowing his own strength to determine when to run away from an opponent was smart, not dumb. Ark desperately tried to find a way to win and the result was the defeat of the Red Slaughterer. There was no point in being ashamed but.....

‘Damn, not yet?’

Ark bit his lip. The battle between the Red Slaughterer and Ark was significant. To be honest, at that time Ark hadn't just been pushed by the level and equipment. He hated to admit it but the Red Slaughterer's skills had overwhelmed Ark. If they were users just passing by each other than that

wouldn't matter. But the Red Slaughterer was Lucifer!

The enemy that Ark had to defeat. They were both aiming for the ultimate goal so they would end up fighting several times in the future. And he couldn't use tricks like the one on Athamas every time. If they were going to fight in the future then his skills needed to at least be equal to the Red Slaughterer. During the time that passed after that battle, Ark neglected sleep while raising his level and polishing off his sword skills.

'I've definitely become stronger.....'

—Let's see how long you can last.

The Red Slaughterer laughed and sent a diagonal slash towards Ark. It was followed by a shower of sword attacks. Despite the fact that Ark quickly recovered and raised his sword, red sparks still flew from his side.

'This guy has also become stronger!'

It was natural. The amount of time wasn't equal for everyone. The Red Slaughterer wasn't just killing time while Ark was growing. Furthermore, the Red Slaughterer's identity was Lucifer. While Ark had to sleep, the Red Slaughterer was an artificial intelligence so he didn't need sleep in the first place. And he was also burning with vengeance for his previous encounter with Ark so it was natural for him to grow more than before!

'But his sword is easier to fend off than before. That means my growth rate is slightly faster. But there is no meaning in growing faster if I don't win.

Damn, I wanted to avoid a confrontation with this guy.....'

He had improved but there was still a slight difference. The Red Slaughterer was still overwhelming Ark. Nevertheless, Ark had been able to hold on for 20 minutes because of his battle suit. The battle suit had upgraded to Lv. 2 on Amara so the enhancement ability rose from 30% to 35%! He also became perfectly synchronized with it thanks to the gene rearrangement in the secret laboratory. And the greatest effect he could from the genetic adjustment.....

‘Stop it, Aegis!’

Ark’s eyes sparkled as he saw the red light. A small object rapidly rotated and soared over Ark’s head. It was a hexagonal shield made of a blue light!

-The body coating skill Mind Shield has been converted by the battle shield.

Armed Mind Shield (Intermediate, Active): When the battle suit is perfectly synchronized, the body coating skills can be enhanced. Instead of a shield that wraps around the whole body, it will be changed into 2 pieces of Aegis shields. The shields might be smaller but its defensive powers are far higher and can be freely controlled by the user.

<Mental Power will be consumed to produce 2 Aegis shields that can move freely>

Mental Power consumption: 300 Cool down time: 30 minutes

The synchronization converted it to Armed Mind Shield! In fact, he had been quiet disappointed when he first saw the information window. The shield that protected the whole body had changed into 2 small shields. He thought the defense range had shrunk. However that idea hanged when he actually tried them out. The defense range of Armed Mind Shield might be narrower than before but that didn’t mean the enemy’s attacks weren’t stopped. Armed Mind Shield could move as he desired.

‘Stop it!’

The moment Ark sensed an enemy attack. The shield moved around Ark in circles like a satellite and blocked the enemy’s attacks. Additionally, the shield that wrapped around the entire body had become a compressed shield so the defense was boosted! The shield could even withstand 3~4 melee hits despite that being the weakness of shields. Aegis was a system that responded to the users’ will to prevent enemy attacks!

There was a disadvantage of course. Ark could only respond to enemy attacks that he detected. If there were bullets fired than he couldn't read the orbit of every attack. The Aegis Shield didn't help in that situation. However in a 1 on 1 sword fight, its effect wasn't a joke.

Snap! Chwajijijijik!

The Red Slaughterer's sword stopped the moment it hit Aegis!

'The level difference will be obvious in close combat. Furthermore, his battle suit is the agility type. His attack speed is also faster than me. If I'm pulled into a fight of power and speed then the odds aren't in my favour!'

Ark got close to the Red Slaughterer and tried to kick his knee.

"Take this.....eh?"

But Ark's knee just hit air. The Red Slaughterer just avoided it like it was expected and smirked.

—I thought that your leg movements were somewhat unnatural. How disappointing. Did you think something like this would get me? Detection!

The sword shot out a red light! Ark hurriedly raised his sword but the Red Slaughterer's Detection was a shock wave attack like Sonic Sword. He felt a pain in his chest and his body was thrown back several metres.

"Heok! Son of a bitch!"

Ark cursed as he was pushed to the end of the deck. Once again, Ark and the Red Slaughterer were fighting on the Silver Star's deck hundreds of metres in the air. If he was pushed off the deck then he would fall several hundred metres! He would be crushed like a tomato even if his health was at 100%.

"Hyper Booster!"

Ark shouted in an urgent voice. The jet devices emerged from his heels. Flames spewed out and Ark's body shot forward like a projectile. However the Red Slaughterer was right in front of him! A red laser light was fired from

the Red Slaughterer's sword.

–Take this! Dragon Fury!

“Sheesh, Welcome to the alter ego!”

Ark's feet moved like lightning and his alter egos appeared. One of them disappeared when hit by the red laser while the others passed behind the Red Slaughterer. But the Red Slaughterer had already seen Welcome to the alter ego.

–No way! Chakra!

Light gathered in the Red Slaughterer's left hand. And his body rotated to block the combined attack from Ark. The Red Slaughterer was about to fight back when he frowned and stopped his action.

–.....What are you doing?

“What?”

–I'm wondering why you're not attacking.

“I don't know what you're saying. Welcome to the alter ego is a skill to deal an unexpected attack to the enemy! But you've seen Welcome to the alter ego before and expected my next movement. And I moved like you expected! Isn't that why you blocked my attack?”

Ark laughed from far away and answered

–That's not what I'm saying!

The Red Slaughterer shouted angrily.

–Did you think I wouldn't notice? This wasn't the only time. You're not fighting seriously. You are just pretending to fight.

“Why do you think that?”

–You've had a few opportunities to launch a counterattack against me. But you stepped back each time. It is the same this time as well. If I expected the

hit than you would've changed the attack. There is no reason to abandon attacking from a profitable position. No, I know that you're not such a passive guy. Then there is only one answer. You aren't fighting seriously. Am I wrong?

It was like the Red Slaughterer said. A battle between two users of a similar standard wouldn't be easy. But once a battle was started, there was a moment where there would be a chance for victory or defeat. So far the Red Slaughterer and Ark had engaged a few times. No, it was just before they were about to engage. Each time Ark would recede and avoid the confrontation. Naturally he had a reason for it.

“Busted.”

Ark sighed and nodded. He scratched his head and laughed.

“In fact, I haven't been thinking about fighting with you. I understand you have bad feelings for me. I smashed you in New World and you got stuck in the government's computer so it is natural to hold a grudge. But isn't that in the past? So let's try to move on. I've already prepared a place for you to live.”

—A place for me to live?

“A state of the art cell phone! You can enter with the 16 GB external memory. But there's even more? There's also a game where you can foster relationships with beautiful girls. There are a total of 16 character styles! If you enter my phone then you can have a beautiful girlfriend. Huhuhu! How about it? Interested? If you stop your threat to blow up the nuclear power plant and enter my cell phone then you can live a happy life with a girl.”

-Talking like that....

“Why? You don't like it? Okay! Then 64 GB! I can't do anything more. That is the biggest memory possible for a cell phone. Instead I will down 10 beautiful girl games. 10 games would be at least 100 people. 64 GB and 100

girls! Wah! How envious! Damn, I should've been born as an artificial intelligence. I'm envious! What a hateful bastard!"

–Stop talking nonsense!

The Red Slaughterer shouted angrily.

–Do you think I'll believe that nonsense?

"No."

Ark replied with a straight face.

"Are you stupid? Nonsense like that can't be true."

-What?

"If you really want to know. The whole reason why I'm avoiding a confrontation with you....."

Ark looked at the Red Slaughterer with a firm expression as he revealed the shocking truth.

"It is like you thought!"

The Red Slaughterer's face distorted at his answer. Ark sighed and continued.

"It hurts my pride but I have to admit it. I thought I raised my level quite a lot but I knew immediately. It will be hard to win against you. Right now there is only a 30% chance. So why should I bother to fight you?"

–Aren't you mistaken about something?

The Red Slaughterer stared at him foolishly.

-This is your ship. There is nowhere for you to flee. What are you going to do if you don't fight? Give up and surrender?

"Of course not."

Ark smiled and replied.

"Fighting isn't the only way to distinguish between victory or defeat. "Hyper

Booster!”

Ark turned his body and shouted. Then Ark rushed across the deck towards the area where Slayer, Kaya and the others were fighting the Rama warriors. When Ark suddenly rushed there, the Red Slaughterer flew forward like a bullet and caught up with him instantly. And he raised his red lightsaber!

–Don’t be mistaken! Your opponent is me!

“Armed Stealth!”

Ark turned and shouted. A tremendous flash emitted from Ark’s body!

-The body coating skill Stealth has been converted by the battle shield.

Armed Stealth (Intermediate, Active): Stealth is a technique where light bends around the body to hide the user from the enemy. However it can’t be used during a fight. It is the same even when wearing a battle suit. However, once the battle suit becomes perfectly synchronized than it is possible to boost the visible light around the body by tens of thousands of times. This light is powerful enough to make the enemy blinded.

<Visible light s amplified and the enemy will be blinded between 1~10 seconds>

Mental Power consumption: 200 Cool down time: 30 minutes

Stealth had been converted after the body synchronization! It didn’t hide his body but it would blind the enemy. The reason why he used Stealth rather than a flash bullet.....

–Ack! T-this bastard.....

The Red Slaughterer who had been chasing Ark slammed the brakes and closed his eyes. He wasn’t the only one. The Red Front had reflexively turned as Ark and the Red Slaughterer neared so they also closed their eyes.

“Now!”

Then Ark's yell was heard in their ears. The Red Slaughterer reacted to his voice and shouted.

–Dammit! Prepare for the enemy's attacks!

He thought Ark's yell was a signal to attack. But contrary to the Red Slaughterer's expectations, the gunshots actually stopped after Ark's yell. Despite the fact that they lost their eyesight, the opponents didn't take the opportunity to shoot bullets. The Red Slaughterer soon realized the reason once his eyesight was restored.

–What on earth.....

Ark's team had climbed up the Silver Star's deck. While the Red Slaughterer and Rama warriors had lost their eyesight, they were gathered near the tentacles. And it was struggling to hold onto the ship? The Red Slaughterer screamed as he saw the scene.

-Red Front! Launch towards the deck!

“You fools, it is too late!”

Ark smiled and muttered. Once again, the Silver Star had been immobile because the Asura's tentacles were holding on to it. The tentacles from the Asura emitted a strong electronic signal that paralyzed the Silver Star's electronics. There were two ways to block this electronic jamming signal.

The first way was to cut off the tentacles sending the electronic jamming signal. And the second way was to make a conflicting signal to neutralize the electronic erosion. The first way couldn't succeed thanks to the interference of the Red Slaughterer and the Red Front.....

–Hyung-nim, I've succeeded in jamming the signal!

Ark had received that communication from Hegel just before he used Armed Stealth. This was the reason Ark dragged out the battle against the Red Slaughterer. There was a 30% chance. It wasn't just Ark and the Red

Slaughterer's duel.

This number also applied to his team members fighting with the Red Front. Of course Slayer, Leon, Kaya, Sadain and the gunner weren't being pushed by the Rama warriors but it was getting difficult for Ellain, Kurakan and Hedro as the battle lengthened. If they continued to battle, almost all the team would be wiped out even if they won! Anyway, there was no reason to fight.

"Milan, turn!"

Wiiing! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Then there was a roaring sound and the Silver Star revolved. The erosion had been counteracted but the Silver Star was still being held by the Asura's tentacles. The Silver Star had to take some damage when it rotated.

Kwadududuk!

The tentacles embedded in the armour were torn out. But the sacrifice was worth it. The moment the Silver Star rotated!

—Cough! Unbelievable!

—No! Waaaaak!

The Rama warriors on the upper deck started falling. However this wasn't enough to take out the Rama warriors. The Red Slaughterer had noticed Ark's plan just before the Silver Star turned so Keiko and the remaining 7 warriors instantly fired wire hooks into the Silver Star, causing them to hang upside down.

—Captain-nim!

—Don't panic! Those guys are hanging from the armour as well. That can't last long in that state, let alone attack. So it will soon turn upright again.

The Red Slaughterer told his subordinates with a growl.

—Dammit! Ark! Doing something cowardly again! Even if this happens.....

The Red Slaughterer then realized something strange. Ark's team were clinging to the ship's armour. But Ark wasn't there with them. No, he couldn't find any traces of Ark at all.

–Did he fall off?

Then a strange substance stuck to the Silver Star's armour caught his eye. It was a red slime that stuck to the armour like chewing gum.

–What is that?

The Red Slaughterer wrinkled his forehead and murmured. All of a sudden a blue light emerged from the slime.

–Is that Ark holding a lightsaber? But how....?

Surprisingly Ark had emerged from the slime while holding his lightsaber. However the scene afterwards was even more amazing. The lightsaber spun in the air and started floating towards the Red Slaughterer and the Red Front. And the lightsaber started passing over the wires attaching them to the hooks!

Wing wing wing wing! Seokeok!

–Hik! T-this.....!

The Red Slaughterer screamed as he watched the wire being cut. He wasn't the only one. The remaining Rama warriors tried to rush forward. Their one lifeline was being ruthlessly cut. And there had already been 4 Rama warriors crushed like rotten tomatoes after they had fallen off onto Impeltus' surface.

Chwaaaaak! Chwaaaaak! Chwaaaaak!

The moment the Red Slaughterer and Rama warriors were about to fall. 5 tentacles rapidly flew out of the Asura to grab the Red Slaughterer, Keiko and the Rama warriors.

–Ack! This is.....

The Red Slaughterer who had barely avoided falling stared with murderous eyes. The Silver Star had rotated 180 degrees and returned to its original position. At that moment, one person soared from the red slime. It was Ark who grabbed the sword that flew back to him! He had activated the Hide skill the moment the Silver Star turned over. And he used Psychokinesis to cut the wire!

–Ark, don't avoid this match and run away!

The Red Slaughterer shouted angrily as he grasped the situation a step too late. Ark laughed as he turned around.

“This is also a match for me!”

In fact, Ark had also thought about a match at first. But it wasn't yet time to face the Red Slaughterer. So his head had rolled desperately to find a way to win. This was the method that surfaced to his head! That's why Ark avoided any confrontations and dragged out the time.

‘The winner is the last guy to survive, not the guy that fights well!’

However.....

“Chet, what a tenacious guy.”

Ark clicked his tongue as he looked at the Red Slaughterer caught by the tentacle. Unfortunately the floating sword still wasn't at a level to move in the direction Ark desired. He couldn't manipulate it delicately enough to strike each enemy. It was impossible to cut up the tentacles.

“Unfortunately it can't be helped.”

The Red Slaughterer and Red Front might've lost but the situation wasn't exactly beneficial for Ark. The ship had recovered from the jamming signal but the guns lost during the battle with the Asura were still unusable.

Of course, the Asura wasn't fine. That ship had lost the most important thing, its engine. However the Asura still had its lower and upper turrets.

‘If those guys aim the turrets at us then we might still lose. There is no guarantee we can repair the main gun and turrets before they repair the Asura’s engine. No, if there was an engineer on the ship than the Asura’s engine would clearly be repaired faster. Then this isn’t the time to delay.’

“This time it is a draw.”

Ark said before turning his back to the Red Slaughterer. He boarded the ship with his team and sat in the captain’s seat.

“Hegel, the energy charge of the Silver Star?”

“It has charged up to 90%!”

“Okay, Milan. Operate the engine to its maximum! Aim outside Impeltus’ atmosphere!”

The Silver Star vertically rose at Ark’s command.

–Dammit! We screwed up! Don’t miss! Kill that bastard!

The scene of the Red Slaughterer dangling from the tentacles like a doll and yelling caught his eye through the window. At the same time shells flew from the Asura! But the shells couldn’t catch up to the Silver Star moving at its maximum speed. And the Silver Star headed towards the swirling purple clouds!

Roaaaaar! Kwaaaang!

They shot off with a roar. The Silver Star’s engine was moving at its maximum output so they didn’t need a long time to exit the atmosphere. The vast universe unfolded as they broke through the swirling clouds.

“Hegel, calculate the coordinates. Start the warp voyage to Turan!”

“Understood!”

Hegel replied vigorously as he pressed buttons on the dashboard. He finally pressed a red button and the Silver Star was wrapped in light. Ark blew out a

sigh as he relaxed. Then the gunner headed towards Ark.

“Ark, don’t you have something to discuss with me?”

“No. But it seems you have something to say to me so I’ll listen.”

Ark nodded and turned towards the gunner. There was a sudden explosion and the ship shook wildly.

Pepeng! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

“Wah! W-what is this?”

“Damn it, did those Rama bastards already follow us?”

“T-this.....the enemy isn’t attacking!”

Hegel yelled as he checked the dashboard.

“Ether fusion system error! Oh my god! The engine received damage during the battle with the Asura! During the voyage, the balance control system failed so there is an error in the warp navigation! In this state we won’t be able to endure the gravity distortion and will be thrown out of orbit!”

Hegel’s scream echoed through the bridge! And.....

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa! Pepepepeng!

They were thrown out!

Lost

Kukung!

The vast stretches of outer space. A huge light pillar separated the darkness. That was the beginning. Small spots of light like firecrackers emerged one after another. And there was a roaring sound before the light pillar stretched out horizontally. 2 spaceships were torn apart and gradually scattered. A spaceship was watching this scene from several kilometres away.

“The disappearance reaction has been confirmed!”

“Both enemy ships have been sunk!”

“We suffered little damage so repairs to the armour isn’t needed. The battleship self-recovery system was suffice. The self-recovery system will be starting now.”

“The battle has ended. A landslide victory!”

The crew in the cockpit reported one after another. Then a huge man wearing hood snorted and said.

“Those stupid guys, it was like they were politely throwing rice cakes at us. They thought they could defeat us with that many ships?”

“Their excess greed caused this.”

The person who replied was sitting in the captain’s chair. The one eyed man was reclined deeply in his seat with both legs crossed while staring at the dashboard! He was a member of the strongest Seven Swords and in charge of the secondary investigation team, Hawk. Hawk looked at the monitor and muttered with a smile.

“Although if they weren’t greedy then I’d be in trouble.”

“Is that so?”

“That’s right. Right now the scattered investigation team is being attacked by an unidentified enemy. If I’m not attacked despite being the leader than wouldn’t it be strange?”

“Aha! Then the Rama.....”

“Entertainment.”

“Huhuhu! The Rama are just dancing in Captain-nim’s palm.”

The man in the hood laughed so hard his large stomach shook.

But Hawk wasn’t laughing.

“Let’s see, is it really like that.....?”

Hawk briefly paused before turning his head and asking.

“Harley, what is the current situation of the units?”

“Last time I’ve checked the signal, 9 ships have been lost. Of those, 6 of them moved off the ship to complete their mission or encountered them on the spaceship. The remaining 3 ships were units who we passed on information to the Rama.”

Ark had received a surprise attack from unidentified enemies on Impeltus. In fact, Ark wasn’t the only one who experienced this. It was the same for all 20 members of the secondary investigation team. However this incident wasn’t unexpected for Hawk.

The person who led this event was Hawk! The memory with the mission destination and information actually contained a hidden GPS device. That’s how Hawk could know their destination despite the team being randomly scattered. After they left for their missions, he sent the information to the spaceships of several units he stationed in space.

The information contained the destination, their information, the numbers and what faction they belonged to. Once again, the nobility had intervened with the investigation team so they were split into the political and military

faction. In this situation they weren't worried about the antimatter information going to the enemy. They thought it was more catastrophic for the information to end up with the other faction than the enemy.

So he started thinking. He had to do something to stop it. The servants of nobles who wanted to 'accidentally' obtain the information before the rival faction participated. The result wasn't too difficult to predict. And it was as he expected. The enemy units headed to their planet containing a team from the opposite faction. Of course, there were members not involved in the faction war.

So Hawk secretly sent the information to the Rama. The secret units hid their identities and attacked at a similar time as the Rama. The reason Hawk did this was.....

'I have to lead this team to successfully complete the mission in order to receive something from the Emperor of the federation. But it will be difficult to control when the team is divided into antagonistic factions. Right now they are listening to my orders but they aren't sincerely cooperating with me. Having thousands of troops means nothing if I can't lead them. The first thing I need to do is break the solidarity between the nobility and the team members. They need to realize that they're not following the nobles sitting in Istana but Hawk. That's why a threat is necessary instead of persuasion.'

The team had already lost 35% of its power due to the unidentified enemy or the Rama. The surviving members would have to think. This mission was more dangerous than expected. They couldn't fight between factions or else they might lose the mission. They needed someone to follow and believe in. Someone closer than the nobles waiting on Istana thousands of light years away.

'And they'll soon realize. Who they should follow.'

Hawk's lips curved like a bow. The members seemed to be under the false impression that Hawk didn't belong to a faction. The Emperor only wore the

crown while the nobles had all the influence. Therefore the Emperor wanted to monopolize the antimatter information so he could reclaim his authority. Hawk had the support of the Emperor.

In other words, Hawk belonged to the Emperor's faction! Hawk planned this incident in order to seize the helm of the investigation team.

"There are 11 survivors....."

Hawk muttered to himself and nodded.

"It is suitable."

And he seemed to have a sudden thought as he asked.

"Ark?"

"He is lost."

"Lost? That guy was one of them?"

"Yes, the signal disappeared near the vicinity of Impeltus. It is natural. Didn't you send two different enemies after him unlike the other members? One of them has a grudge against him. And the other is the Red Slaughterer. The fact that he is a country bumpkin from Istana can't be changed."

"That might be so but....."

Hawk narrowed his eyes as he thought. After a brief moment he shook his head and started to talk.

"I suppose that is the extent that he can reach. If he dies from that than he isn't worth being my enemy. Harley, prepare to warp. Head to Turan!"

"Preparing for warp! The destination is Turan!"

Harley's cry ran out through the battleship and the Death Knight started shaking. It was wrapped in a light and disappeared.

“Uhh!”

“Oooh!”

In the NIS’ secret underground facility. Eerie moans kept on being heard from the underground room. However there was no sympathy in the eyes of Lee Myung-ryong listening from the shadows. He just clicked his tongue instead as their pitiful forms.

“Hey, are they really special agents?”

“I’m ashamed.”

A man with swollen eyes said as he scratched his head. This seemed like a scene that had been seen before.

It was like the first time Lee Myung-ryong was assigned to the NIS Lucifer Hunting team and manipulated the capsules to feel real pain. The Galaxian team members experienced a similar pain to when he was playing New World. The audio might be similar but the video was completely different.

Capsules were lined up inside the facility. 300 burly men had their heads against the ground with their arms clasped behind their back. It was the traditional method called Wonsan pukkyeok ([Google Images](#))

“Are you newborn puppies? Why are you whining like that? Eh? These bastards, why aren’t your backs straight? Are you resisting? Are you resisting? Will you continue until the end?”

“Ohh, n-no!”

“No what? Add 30 minutes!”

There were hopeless groans at Lee Myung-ryong’s yell. Kang Ho-cheol sighed and said.

“Hyung-nim, it has already been 40 minutes.”

“So what?”

Lee Myung-ryong turned around and declared sharply. Lee Myung-ryong's height was over 170 centimetres. On the other hand, Kang Ho-cheol was close to 190 centimetres. There was a difference of 20 centimetres yet Kang Ho-cheol was the one who flinched back from Lee Myung-ryong and stuttered.

“That....those guys seem to already be reflecting.....”

“Reflecting?” Ha! You call that attitude reflecting? If you think that is reflecting than your style of punishment is wrong. Those guys know they are wrong after whining for 40 minutes? These guys are the elites who received special training?”

“They are special agents, not Superman.”

“I'm also not a politician.”

Lee Myung-ryong spat as he replied. His voice and expression proved that he was completely blowing his lid right now. The reason for this was an event that occurred a few hours ago.

Once Lee Myung-ryong made it a 4D realistic experience, the performance of the Lucifer Hunting team quickly rose. They gained various survival skills so their levels naturally increased as survival rates increased. They didn't dare capture dungeons and went hunting every day.

Then a strange report came to Lee Myung-ryong's attention. The current Lucifer Hunting team were moving in units consisting of 10~20 people. The report written by one team stated that they were proceeding on a quest with rare items as the reward. A quest with rare items had a high level of difficulty so the team significantly suffered.

That wasn't special. The problem was what Lee Myung-ryong read afterwards in another report. Another party could complete the same quest. And the principle of the Lucifer Hunting team was sharing information. However the other party that attempted it made the same mistakes in the

same areas. It meant information wasn't being shared.

“That’s actually.....”

Kang Ho-cheol hesitated to reply when he was asked.

“Like I said the other day, the Lucifer Hunting team consists of members from the NIS and an information oriented team. The affiliation they belong to is naturally different. The NIS is under the direct control of the Prime Minister’s department while the information oriented unit is managed by the Department of Defense. The problem is that the Prime Minister’s office and the Department of Defense are engaged in a psychological warfare to gain the initiative.”

“Psychological warfare?”

“They are vying against each other in that incident.”

Lee Myung-ryong’s face warped at Kang Ho-cheol’s words. He didn’t need to hear anymore. He just needed to hear that government employees from Korea were involved. If there was a problem than they would push responsibility to each other. That was the reality of Korean officials.

Of course, Lee Myung-ryong knew that about the officials. But this event was concerned with the nuclear power plant crisis. If it exploded than the whole country would feel it. Yet! Yet!

“Hyung-nim, just pretend you don’t know.....”

“Shut up, you bastard!”

Lee Myung-ryong hit Kang Ho-cheol. Now he had two eyes that were swollen.

“Stop all your movements! Exit the capsules!”

And Lee Myung-ryong roared! That’s why the facility was filled with the groan of 300 people. Lee Myung-ryong looked at them with blazing eyes and it seemed like fire was spewing from his mouth.

“Are you soldiers belong to the government officials or the country? Won’t your parents, siblings and friends be affected if the nuclear power plant explodes? You puppies! No, a dog wouldn’t do something like this! You bastards are just dog shit!”

“Uh.....uh.....”

Sweat dripped down as the guys trembled. Kang Ho-cheol sighed and opened up.

“Hyung-nim, don’t you know? They are military soldiers so they have to turn if they are told to.”

“Shut up, you bastard! Do they have no thoughts in their brains just because they are soldiers? Would you kill your parents or siblings if you were told to? Does this seem like a joke? Don’t you know what will happen with a nuclear explosion? In such a situation! In order to win the war, don’t you have to be soldiers who think despite orders from your superiors?”

“B-but.....”

“I know. But those guys aren’t involved in the actual hunting!”

Lee Myung-ryong shouted loudly. He belonged to the police organization so he knew this issue wouldn’t be easily resolved. And he had no intention of backing down. He would smash any idea of listening to the Prime Minister or Department of Defense.

“I have to fix your rotten spirits!”

Lee Myung-ryong roared like a beast.

“Add 30 minutes again. You can get up if it’s too hard. However you have to immediately call you parents and say ‘I might cause a nuclear explosion because I followed the commands of the leaders in charge of Korea’ to them.”

“Oooh.....”

“Dammit, I feel dirty. Kang Ho-cheol, I can’t stay here anymore because I’m so angry. I’m going to walk in the wind so keep watch. One hour from now. Make sure you check the time.”

“Understood.”

Kang Ho-cheol replied in a melancholy voice as Lee Myung-ryong headed for a smoke. He sucked cigarette smoke containing nickel, arsenic, benzene, cadmium etc. into his lungs as he tried to calm down. Lee Myung-ryong borrowed the power of the nicotine to calmly consider the situation.

Like he told Kang Ho-cheol, Lee Myung-ryong had no intention of changing his methods. He didn’t intend to negotiate with the Prime Minister’s office or the Department of Defense over the Lucifer Hunting team. He knew that wasn’t the solution to his problem. There was no guarantee that the superiors would keep a promise they made with him. No, Lee Myung-ryong’s neck would probably be the first one to fly off if anything went wrong.

“This place is really foolish.....”

In fact, Lee Myung-ryong hadn’t really felt that the nuclear power plant crisis was real yet. But it was like the politicians were fighting over a bowl of rice. It was a ridiculous act for adults who should be acting responsible. When could he escape this ridiculous system of organization?

“I need a way to monitor how the team acts in the game. If they don’t report it in the report then there is no way to determine what is going on. I need to monitor their actions in the game as well as read the reports.....”

Then a name popped into his head. Lee Myung-ryong’s student who managed to reverse his life by playing a game, Kim Hyun-woo!

“Yes! There is that guy. He is one of the 50 gamers selected by the NIS to play Galaxian!”

Lee Myung-ryong stood up. Cell phones were prohibited so he rushed into the NIS’ communication room and called Hyun-woo. However.....

-The customer can't receive your call right now so please call back after a while.

That was the voice he heard after a long beep.

“Dammit! What is that child doing?”

Diririri. Diririri.

He heard the ringing of his phone.

-The phone number can't be confirmed.

That was the message that appeared on his screen. The message was obvious. 99% of a SMS phishing.

“Damn, there's also this. Do you think I'm a soft touch? What is the NIS doing? Every day you open your mouth and boast about what a wide intelligence network you have. Yet you can't grab these guys behind the phishing.

He wanted to curse. But Hyun-woo didn't want to think about such matters right now. Hyun-woo switched his phone to silent mode and placed it into his pocket.

There was a big house in front of him. No, it was more like a castle than a house. A road at least 3~4 metres stretched from the fence surrounding it. Beyond the fence was a large garden that the building couldn't even be seen. The surprising thing was that there was a house like this in the heart of Seoul.

“Is this really the house?”

Hyun-woo hesitated as he confirmed the address a few times. And he finally had the courage to ring the bell.

“Are you Hyun-woo?”

“Huh? Ah, yes! I’m Kim Hyun-woo.”

“I’ve been waiting for you. Come in.”

The lavish doors opened at the business like voice. They probably saw his appearance from the CCTV. Did they think he would feel ashamed at the thought of someone watching him? There was no reason for him to be daunted by money.

And this wasn’t the first time he had seen a house like this. The president of Global Exos had invited Hyun-woo to his house. Thanks to that, Hyun-woo had built an immunity so he walked through the garden towards the front door without a hitch.

“Come in.”

A middle aged man who seemed to be a caretaker showed him into a large living room.

“Please wait a moment. He should come soon.”

The caretaker said before disappearing through a side door in the living room.

In order to explain why Hyun-woo came to a place like this, he had to rewind to a few hours ago.

-Ark, don’t you have something to discuss with me?

-No. But it seems you have something to say to me so I’ll listen.

This was the dialogue Hyun-woo exchanged some time ago with the gunner inside Galaxian. Shortly afterwards there was an explosion on the Silver Star so the talk stopped and resumed after the situation was cleaned up. But there was little progress.

It was because of Hyun-woo’s circumstances. The gunner was curious about the relationship between the Red Slaughterer and Lucifer. If it was just that then it would be simple to prevaricate. And he had tried.

However the gunner was aware that Lucifer was an artificial intelligence created by Park Woo-seong. It meant he couldn't trick the gunner. But he couldn't explain that Lucifer was controlling the nuclear power plant because it was a state secret. Hyun-woo wondered how the gunner knew about Lucifer's identity but he couldn't just disclose a state secret.

–It is obvious that you are hiding something. No matter what happens, I need to know about Lucifer. And I deserve to know. But you won't believe what I have to say. So I will prove it. That I am a person entitled to know about Lucifer.

The gunner then sent him a message on his Nymphé. The message had his home address. In other words, this was the gunner's house.

‘What is his identity? How does he know about Lucifer? If he lives in a house like this then is he related to Global Exos?’

Hyun-woo felt half expectant and half anxious at the thought.

“Are you Ark?”

He suddenly heard someone's voice. Hyun-woo lifted his head with surprise to see someone walking in with a cane. But the face looked strangely familiar. Hyun-woo struggled to remember while the guy nodded.

“Yes, you are Ark.”

“Then you are the gunner.....but you are.....”

“Rapid.”

The man spoke as he limped over and sat down.

“But you might know me by my original name.....”

“Alan?”

The man closed his mouth at Hyun-woo's words. And he looked at Hyun-woo for a moment before smiling.

“You remember.”

It was impossible for him to not remember. During the New World era and before the decisive battle with Lucifer, Alan had been his worst and strongest enemy for 2 years! At that time just hearing the name Alan was enough to make him grind his teeth together. However that was a past event. 2 years of fighting ended with Hyun-woo’s victory.

The winner shouldn’t hold a grudge against the loser. But Hyun-woo hadn’t forgotten about his grudge against Alan simply because he was the winner. It was because he heard that Alan was in a coma shortly after the final battle.

Of course this wasn’t Hyun-woo’s fault. There was no reason for it but he couldn’t help feeling guilty. Now he had appeared in front of Hyun-woo again. He didn’t seem the same as before but he could walk by himself.

Hyun-woo was gripped with incomprehensible emotions as he looked at him. A mixture of the old dislike and a glad feeling rose inside him. But Hyun-woo didn’t express these feelings. Instead he pasted on a hateful expression.

“You look like a zombie.”

“You loathsome person.”

“It is better than talking like a good guy. Just having you speak like that is enough to give me hives.”

“Ditto. Well, I would rather you call me a zombie than giving me pity. I don’t want pity from a guy like you.”

“So?”

“So what?”

“Do you still have feelings of revenge against me? Is that why you approached me as Rapid? To get revenge for New World in Galaxian?”

“Revenge.....what about it?”

“That....”

“Don’t misunderstand.”

Alan interrupted Hyun-woo’s words.

“Obviously you defeated me several times in New World. I don’t want to deny that fact. But that’s it. I played a game and met a stronger player than me. The grudge ended in that game.”

“Then why are you hostile in Galaxian?”

“That’s your misunderstanding. I had nothing to do with the events that took place in S-20.”

“You were part of the black helmet crew that attacked me on Impeltus. No, didn’t you attack me with Valencia? Is that also a misunderstanding?”

“You knew?”

“Just now. If Rapid is the gunner than his identity is obvious.”

“You might not remember this but I was there the first time you fought the Red Slaughterer on Athamas. It is difficult to explain but I was forcibly drafted to Athamas’ battlefield. The person who helped me at that time was Marquis Jyubel. He thought I might be useful so he did me a favour. In fact, the quest was registered the moment I returned to Istana.”

At that time, Alan had wanted to return to Istana as soon as possible to meet Ark. He accepted the quest and then Marquis Jyubel contacted Alan after the chaotic raid happened in S-20.

It was for the investigation team mission. At the time Alan had been thinking about refusing the quest. But he changed his mind once he heard that Hyun-woo was participating in the mission. Anyway, his purpose for participating in the investigation team was to meet Hyun-woo.

“Everything was in order to meet with me?”

“Yes, that’s why I started Galaxian.”

“If it isn’t for revenge than why?”

“I wanted to see you.”

Hyun-woo’s blood ran cold. Hyun-woo avoided Alan’s eyes and said.

“I’m sorry. Please forgive me. I’ve got a girlfriend.”

Alan’s eyebrow raised with confusion at Hyun-woo’s words. He thought for a moment before understanding and shouting with disgust.

” What are you talking about? Why would you say such a thing.....?”

“But it’s weird! You wanted to see me? You can’t just suddenly say that to someone!”

“I don’t like you like that!”

“R-really? You don’t like me?”

“Disgusting! I hate you! Is that enough?”

“Phew! That’s lucky. Good. Now continue talking. You wanted to see me, and?”

“That’s enough! Can you stop interrupting me? And now it is your turn. Did you forget? I didn’t call you here to be the only one talking. I deserve to know about ‘that.’ And I think I’ve proved it. I have the qualifications to know about ‘that’ so tell me.”

“Lucifer.....”

Hyun-woo sighed and shrugged his shoulders. He had to admit it. Alan certainly deserved to know about Lucifer. Alan had become a Ruin Knight in order to become Hyun-woo’s rival and eventually entered a coma because of Lucifer.

Alan was a guy with a large amount of pride. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that Hyun-woo and Alan’s bad relationship started because of pride. Now

Alan said he forgot his grudge against Hyun-woo. If it really didn't disappear than his grudge might've become even stronger. Even if his grudge was discarded, he might be angry about being exploited by a mere artificial intelligence.

'Is it really a good thing to tell Alan about Lucifer?'

Just as Hyun-woo was thinking this.

"Don't think about hiding it. If you don't tell me then I will use any means and methods to figure it out. I will inform the world about the relationship between Global Exos, New World and Lucifer!"

"There is no need to use such threats....."

Alan would eventually find out anyway.

"I'll tell you."

Hyun-woo sighed and nodded. But he couldn't explain all the facts. Lucifer threatening to take over the nuclear power plant was a government secret. But Alan's nature wasn't the type to make a fuss.

In the end Hyun-woo explained the situation like this.

Lucifer knew that Ark disappeared from New World so he hacked into Global Exos' confidential user files and infiltrated Galaxian. If they wanted the confidential documents to be returned than they needed to reach the ultimate goal in Galaxian before them. Therefore Global Exos selected Hyun-woo and 50 promising gamers to deal with Lucifer.

"Then really....."

"Yes, the Red Slaughterer is Lucifer."

Hyun-woo nodded and studied Alan's face. Alan didn't say anything for a while. And after a moment he burst out laughing.

"Kukukuku. Hahahaha!"

“W-what’s with this reaction? Are you okay? Did you receive a psychological shock.....?”

“Ark! Ark! Ark! Ark!”

Alan turned and kept on shouting. The expression on his face was impossible to decipher as he spoke.

“I was looking for an answer the whole time. I was just looking without knowing the answer. I think I know the answer thanks to you. So I dragged my body while thinking about meeting you. But that isn’t it. Now I understand. This is why I started Galaxian. My body knew what I wanted before my head did. I know what is necessary for a full recovery. Lucifer! A mere artificial intelligence that made me a joke! He is the necessary sacrifice in order to regain my wounded pride!”

‘Hey! Hey! Are you insane? What does your body know? Is your body a radar? Didn’t you just find out that Lucifer is in Galaxian? Furthermore, is Lucifer like ginseng? Will defeating him make your body better? And what sacrifice? A devil? Will sacrificing him restore your body? Your eyes look dangerous right now! He looks dangerous! Should I call 119 before it is too late?’

Those words climbed in Hyun-woo’s throat at Alan’s sudden reaction. Then Alan looked back at Hyun-woo. The corner of his mouth lifted and he muttered.

“Now I can achieve two goals at the same time. Watching you and getting revenge for Lucifer. If I come with you then I will end up meeting Lucifer.”

“What? With me? You, in the future.....”

“Please Ark!”

Alan emphatically said. His expression indicated that Hyun-woo would be just like Lucifer if he rejected.

Asteroid E-2036

“Newcomer.”

Ark looked at his team and said. He was standing next to a man wearing the black helmet, the gunner.

“There were various situations so he has decided to go with us from now on. Hey! What are you doing? Take off the black helmet and say a word to your colleagues.”

Ark elbowed the gunner in his side while speaking. The gunner was Rapid, Rapid was Alan! That’s right. Ark finally decided to accept Alan as his colleague. Of course, it wasn’t a simple decision.

Who was Alan? Since Ark started New World, he was a strong user and his rival for 2 years. He couldn’t blindly trust him now. But he could believe one thing. He held a bigger grudge against Lucifer than Ark.

It was a common strategy. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. As long as Lucifer was a common enemy in Galaxian, Alan wouldn’t betray Ark.

‘If I’m convinced he won’t betray me.....’

Ark knew him better than anyone else.

‘A user like Alan who demonstrates competence in all areas is rare. Isn’t he like Guan Yu from Romance of the Three Kingdoms? I might’ve beaten him in New World but his military strength and political power can’t be underestimated.’

The evidence of Alan’s skills was his previous stay in S-20.

While Ark was away for 10 days, S-20 developed into a place he didn’t know. At the time he was surprised because of Rapid. But now that he knew it was Alan, he wasn’t surprised at all. Alan had shown the same competence

in New World.

‘I don’t think he is lying and my biggest enemy is Lucifer. And Lucifer is also Alan’s target. He will move more eagerly than anyone else if it is to stop Lucifer. I also believe in his ability. In that respect, Alan is the companion most needed right now.’

There was no reason to refuse! That was the conclusion Ark came to. However there was a bit of noise.

“What? What are you saying all of a sudden?”

Slayer looked at Alan and started complaining.

“Have you forgotten? Melina-nim and Park died because those black helmet guys suddenly attacked us! And that guy was with the black helmets! But now he is our colleague? How can I believe a man like him? Isn’t that right?”

“Yes. It isn’t right.”

“See! Kaya....eh? What?”

“What reason do I have to oppose it? Didn’t you hear Ark? That guy wasn’t friends with the black helmets from the beginning. He stuck to that group due to various circumstances.”

“How do you know that?”

“You should think a little more with your head. We were able to escape unharmed from the laboratory because of his help. If he hadn’t stopped them from manning the entrance and installed a bomb on their ship then we would’ve been wiped out. Would he do such a thing if he is with the black helmets?”

“T-that....”

“So there is no reason to oppose the addition of a strong peer. Didn’t you see? When he fought the Rama. He is definitely strong. In addition, he has the most important thing.”

“The most important thing?”

Slayer asked with confusion. Kaya replied with a laugh.

“His face, it is handsome.”

“Kaack! This stupid woman! Why does that matter?”

“Why does it matter? Don’t you know that a rice cake won’t look good to eat if it wasn’t for the red coating?”

“W-what does it have to do with eating? Should a woman be talking like that?”

“Why are you hung up on that part? It wasn’t what I meant. Are you a pervert?”

“You’re the pervert! This player like girl!”

“P-player? What did you say?”

“I said it! What are you going to do? Speaking of that, how is he handsome? He just seems like a beggar type guy. He just made his game character look like this. You’ll see. That guy probably has a lot of pimples on his stomach. He probably casually touches his snot and farts openly!”

“Why are you going into such details? Are you sure you’re not talking about yourself?”

“It’s sad but you can’t deny it.”

Leon looked at Slayer with a regretful face. Then Kaya said with a hateful expression.

“Yes, I knew it. Okay. I’ll be sure to say it when I met Melina again. That you dig out your snot with your hand and fart openly.”

“Ah,no! I wash my hands!”

“You probably touch the snot after washing your hands and then eats food with it.”

“No that’s not me! It is him!”

Slayer spat and pointed towards Alan who took off his helmet. Then Alan turned towards Ark and asked.

“So...can I put a bullet in that guy’s forehead?”

“I admit my subordinate is a bit out of control but he will calm down. It is because the relationship between my subordinates are important.”

“That’s why I asked you first if I could put a bullet in his head.”

“You brat, you sure are keen.”

Ark moved forward with a smile. He looked at Slayer who had dug out a booger with his hand and was trying to touch Kaya with it and said.

“I know this is abrupt. But there is a reason this guy needs to travel with me. Of course, that reason is between this guy and me. But you are also affected by this event. This mission was harder than we expected. So think of it as a chance to reinforce our power. But I am a fair leader. So this decision will be democratically chosen by the majority. If there is more in opposition then I will exclude this friend from this mission at least.”

This actually wasn’t fair or impartial.

Currently the team had 10 people excluding Ark. Among them was Slayer, Leon, Sadain and Kaya. Milan, Hegel, Ellain, Kurakan, Kalliben and Hedro. The majority of the team including the 6 members of Dark Eden.

“We will unconditionally follow Hyung-nim’s will!”

The staff who regarded Ark’s words as a law voted in his favour!

“I also agree of course. There has to be at least one man like that.”

Kaya also voted in agreement due to her own selfish reasons!

“It doesn’t matter to me. But if our power increases then there is no reason to oppose it.”

Sadain also voted in agreement.

“Uh....I agree as well.”

Leon sensed what side it was tilting towards and decided to be on the side of the majority. 9 to 1, it was GAME OVER with an overwhelming majority of votes!

“Damn! Whatever! Bah! Che! Byong!”

Thanks to Slayer’s graceful (?) resignation, Alan officially joined the team. And the formalities were completed!

-Aram has joined Dark Eden as an intern.

Name: Aram (User)

Profession: Gunner

Level: 92

Related Skills: Quick Fire, Consecutive Fire, Manoeuvre Fire.....

The name Rapid used in Galaxian was Aram. He wanted to use Alan that he originally used in New World but it was sold out so he went with a similar name.

‘Even so, Aram.....’

It seemed somewhat weak. It made him feel like laughing for some reason. So Ark decided to just call him Rapid.

“Any complaints?”

“I don’t care about my name.”

“But you’re level 92?”

“Yes, is there a level restriction to enter your company?”

“No, that’s not it....”

Rapid had killed the 2 people with Valencia instantly, even if they were caught off guard and engaged in a fight with the leader of the Red Front Keiko. Therefore Ark had expected Rapid to be at least level 100. But the level listed in his employee ID was only 92. Despite that, it didn’t feel like he was weaker than the level 110 Slayer.

‘It means he covers his lower level with skill proficiency. Hasn’t he barely recovered enough to walk alone at home? At any rate, I can’t be careless.’

Anyway, Rapid was now Ark’s subordinate! Ark closed the staff information window and laughed.

“Don’t you know? I am the President.”

“I know what you want to say. I won’t put a bullet in the back of your head until Lucifer is taken care of.”

“Well, don’t betray me. I will be watching carefully.”

“Are you going to keep on talking such nonsense?”

Rapid loaded the bullets in his pistol and stared at Ark. Damn, an employee that was threatening the President! This guy was acting like this when he just joined but now wasn’t the time for joking or relaxing.

‘But.....’

Ark sighed and looked out the window. Grey rocks were the only thing that came into view. The reason Ark and his companions were here went back to several hours ago.

“Ether fusion system error! Oh my god! The engine received damage during the battle with the Asura! During the voyage, the balance control system failed so there is an error in the warp navigation! In this state we won’t be able to endure the gravity distortion and will be thrown out of orbit!”

Shortly after they left Impeltus and began warp sailing. The ominous words emerged from Hegel's mouth.

And.....pepepeng!

The prediction was a reality. There was a ringing sound and the Silver Star was thrown out of warp orbit. It was fortunate that the accident occurred shortly after entering warp.

Warp technology created a multidimensional portal through outer space. The ship was already in a different dimension once warp began. In that state the ship was thrown out of orbit.

In the worst case scenario, it would be trapped in a different space and time and the ship would blow up. Fortunately, warp hadn't started for that long so the Silver Star wasn't severely damaged but further flight was impossible. Ark was able to use the emergency engine to land the Silver Star on the closest planet.

This place was where he made the force landing. It was an asteroid with the number E-2036. Although it was lucky he managed to land here.....

"Many of the Silver Star's systems were damaged when it collided with the Asura. The damage worsened when we were thrown out of warp orbit. Some important parts of the engine became overloaded and have completely melted."

Those were Hegel's words when he checked the engine.

"The time required for repairs?"

"It will take at least 5 days to just repair the engine."

"5 days....."

He naturally sighed at Hegel's answer. The problem wasn't the time it would take for repairs.

"The biggest problem right now is the fuel rods. The energy flowed

backwards when the engine overloaded so 2 fuel rods have ruptured. No, it is because the fuel rods can't handle the energy flowing backwards that there is a problem with the engine. Anyway, only 3 fuel rods remains. Even if we repair the engine, if the missing fuel rods aren't replaced then the Silver Star can't move."

'Damn, this is why I shouldn't buy used items!'

In fact, the Silver Star's fuel rods were used. When he found the Silver Star on Amara, all the fuel rods had already been destroyed. Ark had seized the fuel rods from the Kero's airship to move the Silver Star. However, airship had been attacked by the Nakuma so the fuel rods were quite damaged. Ark knew he should've bought new products.....

'The price of one fuel rod is 500 gold!'

And the Silver Star used 4 fuel rods. If he wanted to replace all the fuel rods then it would require 2,000 gold. So Ark thought about it.

"There is still plenty of energy despite being used. It would be a waste to discard perfectly fine energy like this. Discarding the fuel rods when there is still energy remaining is a crime, a crime! Yes, my pocket is tight so I can't waste money on something like this. Well, I'm a little nervous but no problems have occurred. There should be no trouble in using it to move the Silver Star.'

Yet an incident ended up occurring in the end. The fuel rods couldn't endure the energy flowing backwards and ruptured. If he had changed to a new product then this situation wouldn't have occurred. Rapid clicked his tongue after hearing about the situation.

"Really, a guy like you....."

"I know. Don't say anything. I'm also upset."

"So? What will you do?"

“There’s nothing to worry about.”

Then Kaya interrupted.

“If the fuel rods are destroyed, doesn’t that mean the Silver Star can’t sail even if it is repaired? So there is only one way. Send a request to Turan and wait. Either way, we’re all part of the investigation team. If Hawk receives the distress signal then wouldn’t he send some fuel rods or come to tow us?”

“That won’t work.”

Ark answered without thinking about it. In fact, he discovered several things since meeting with Rapid. Ark learnt that the one who gave the location of the secret laboratory to Valencia was Hawk.

According to Rapid, Hawk had visited Marquis Jyubel on Istana and proposed the ‘Anti-Ark Alliance.’ Shortly after the investigation team left Turan, he had sent the information that Ark was heading to Impeltus to Valencia.

‘Dammit, I knew something was strange the first time I saw him.....’

The fact that he secretly told Valencia Ark’s location meant he was an opponent.

‘Perhaps it isn’t an accident that the Red Slaughterer showed up on Impeltus. When looking at the Red Slaughterer’s attitude, there is no way we could meet accidentally. He was clearly aware that I was on Impeltus. Clearly someone from the study group leaked the information. Hawk! I don’t know why he is so hostile to me but there is no doubt that he is an enemy.’

How could the Silver Star send a rescue request to a guy like that? He would rather be shot in the head. It was more likely that the Red Slaughterer would come instead of a rescue party. No, if he hadn’t heard the circumstances from Rapid then the Red Slaughterer would probably already be here.

‘It is due to this!’

Ark looked down at the USB in his hand. He had sensed something when Ark heard that Hawk told Valencia his location. The USBs were randomly distributed so Hawk so have no way to know Ark's location! Then there must be something in the USB device. Sure enough.

-Hegel has used 'Item Analysis.'

<A hidden device has been found in the item. A GPS device has been discovered. This GPS device sends out signals based on the spaceship's navigation device>

*A hidden item has been discovered and Hegel's Item Analysis proficiency has increased.

A GPS equipment was hidden in the USB. The GPS transmitted the signal from the spaceship's navigation device! Ark learnt about the USB device and stopped the signal from being sent to Hawk. This was the reason Hawk lost the location of the Silver Star. However Ark hadn't spoken about this with his team members yet. He wouldn't say anything until he found out why Hawk was doing this.

"They are still competitors even if we are part of the same investigation team. There is no guarantee help will arrive even if a request is sent. The team consists of enemies from the other faction as well as allies. It is better not to announce that we're in a crisis."

"But there isn't any other way."

"I've thought about it....."

Ark looked back at his team and grinned.

"Do you know why I landed on this asteroid?"

When the Silver Star exited warp, it had been surrounded by several hundred asteroids. And there were a number of closer asteroids that he could land

on. But Ark had made the Silver Star continue flying for another 30 minutes before making an emergency landing.

There was one reason!

“This is the only one with a metal reaction.”

“Metal?”

Slayer tilted his head to one side.

“Yes, the asteroids in this region come from a destroyed planet. Yet this is the only asteroid with a metal reaction. Then I can only think of two things. It means the previous planet contains a metal lode that split off into this asteroid. But that possibility isn’t high since the other asteroids have no metal reaction. In other words.....”

“A spaceship.”

Those were Rapid’s words. Ark grinned and nodded.

“That’s right. No, I should say that it is an abandoned ship. Ships aren’t just lost because of accidents or battles. Some ships are swallowed by a black hole or drawn down by the gravity of a planet’s atmosphere. An asteroid doesn’t have an atmosphere so spaceships drawn down would stay there.”

This was the reason why Ark desperately flew to this asteroid. He landed the Silver Star on the asteroid that the optical scanner sensed a metal reaction from because there was a possibility that there was an abandoned ship.

‘The Silver Star doesn’t just need energy. Many areas were damaged during the fight with the Asura so a bunch of spare parts are needed for repairs. The easier way to get those parts is from another ship! Hopefully I can gain materials for repairs without needing to spend money. Besides, who knows? Maybe the ship might still contain fuel rods? If I find fuel rods that are full then it will be a jackpot!’

.....He still hadn’t learnt his lesson about used fuel rods. However other

players also used second-hand mechanical parts.

Most of the current ships in Galaxian had a self-recovery mechanism to repair minor damage. However repairs were necessary for ruptures or destroyed parts. Parts required for repair would cost thousands of gold!

If a user had a battle fleet then it would cost so much money it could drive someone to bankruptcy. That's why many users looked for abandoned spaceships for mechanical parts to repair their ship.

Many people who towed abandoned ships could sell the second-hand parts for quite a high price. People who did that were professional Scavengers. He had heard about this from the Scavenger Heksu of the Silver Hand. Anyway!

“Hyung-nim, I’ve found it!”

Hegel confirmed the data from the optical scanners sent to examine the asteroid and shouted.

“There is a lot of metal materials 3 kilometres from here! Based on the numbers, the probability that it is an abandoned ship is extremely high!”

Ark smiled at his team.

“You’ve rested enough now! Go and make money!”

Ark never forgot about his mission.

The planet Tatooine in the Centre of the Istana.

A bunch of guys dragged in a container in the terminal cargo of the space port.

“Welcome.....”

The employee flinched as he looked up and shut his mouth. The employee could recognize the men dragging the container with just a glance. There were long knife marks down the face and visible tattoos.

Kkakdugi! These guys were Kkakdugi!

He couldn't think anything else after seeing their appearance. The despondent employee avoided their gaze and said.

“E-excuse me.....what did you need.....?”

“What other reason it there to come to the cargo counter? A courier.”

“C-courier?”

“Yes, this container! As soon as possible!”

“Ah, yes. Then please list the item and destination on this paper.”

The employee held out the paperwork.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

There was suddenly a sound coming from inside the container! The employee looked surprised while the Kkakdugi had annoyed expressions.

“Sheesh, this guy doesn't give up. Hey, keep him quiet!”

“Yes, Hyung-nim!”

2 Kkakdugi opened the lock to the container at their big leader's command. And.....

Bam! Ahwook! Bam bam! Ahwook! Ahwook! Bam bam bam! Ahwook! Ahwook!

Unimaginable sounds were heard until it became quiet inside.

“Hyung-nim, he was put to sleep again.”

“Good work. Hey! Employee, where should I write?”

“Huh? Ah, yes! W-w-write over here!”

The employee who had been watching blankly quickly replied.

‘Guy? D-didn't he clearly say that? What, what the? Then a person is inside

that container? Human trafficking? Oh my god! T-these Kkakdugi want to commit human trafficking through a courier?’

The employee’s heart jumped as he grasped the situation. As a public official in the galaxy, he just had to complete his work safe and sound until he could retire with a pension. This event was like being struck by lightning to a public servant.

Of course, if he reported their transgressions to the authorities than he wouldn’t be held responsible. But if he did that then he would be pointing a criminal organization towards him!

Gangster violence → harassment → miserable days → pain → suicide.

The route for a gloomy life flashed through his head. So the employee just stood there and didn’t do anything.

“This is urgent. How long will it take to arrive?”

The employee replied to the Kkadugi leader’s question.

“As you know, it might take a few days to arrive at the destination even if you apply for a courier. These days many couriers prohibit trafficking or biological or illegal goods so measures are taken on all couriers leaving the planet to prevent smuggling. Ah, not that I’m doubting you. I’m just telling you the process. So it will take at least a few days to arrive at your destination.”

‘So just take it! I don’t want to be entangled in something like this!’

The employee inwardly hoped. Then the Kkadugi leader extended some documents.

“What about this?”

“Huh? This is.....heok! T-this?”

-Special certificate of goods.

This cargo is exempt from quarantine and the transport fee.

Galactic Federation's Headquarters.

'W-why do gangsters like these have cargo from Central Headquarters?'

There was something suspicious about this event but the employee quickly shook his head. He shouldn't question it in order to live a long life.

Anyway, if this was a special cargo from Headquarters then he wouldn't be held responsible if any problems occurred. If he didn't have to shoulder responsibility then it didn't matter if the cargo was a person or a nuclear bomb. He only wanted to get rid of the worrisome cargo as quickly as possible.

"I'll process it right now!"

Thus the whole procedure was skipped! The cargo departed on a spaceship 5 minutes later.

Asteroid E-2036 that the Silver Star landed on.

Exploring this asteroid was actually quite complicated. There was no difference between the asteroid and outer space. Naturally there was no air in the atmosphere. Moreover, there was no sun so the temperature was -275 degrees! There was cosmic radiation so even a pioneer with a body coating couldn't be exposed for more than 10 minutes without wearing a spacesuit.

However there was one good thing.

—Is it here?

Rapid's voice was heard from the Nymphe. He was wearing a spacesuit on

Ark's right and communicating with his Nymph.

"Yes, it should be underground."

Ark replied as he looked over a huge hole. The huge hole had appeared when he moved to the place Hegel indicated. The hole was so dark he couldn't even fathom how deep it was.

—What should we do?

"I'll lead first so follow me."

Ark jumped into the hole without hesitation.

That was the good point about space. There was no atmosphere in this place so it was basically weightless. Then height and mass wouldn't be a problem. Even if Ark jumped down, it was just like his body was floating in the air.

Chiik! Chiik!

Ark's body moved as he sprayed the jet device attached to his suit. He directed the jet device upwards as he slowly headed downwards into the hole. The 8 remaining team members except for Hegel and Milan who stayed on the Silver Star followed behind him.

—Are you feeling strange?

—Yes. This feeling is like I'm entering the stomach of a huge monster.

—Did you hear someone gasping just now?

—Isn't that just your breath?

Tension was heard in Kaya's voice even when she bluntly replied to Slayer. Nothing could be heard except for their breathing. They felt an eerie tension as they followed Ark down the invisible hole. However that tension didn't last long.

Tung-! Tung-! Tung-!

There was a sound the moment their foot hit the ground.

“.....Bingo!”

A smile flashed on Ark’s mouth as he looked around with Clairvoyance. In fact, Ark didn’t have large expectations.

This was the pioneering age but it wasn’t like there were billions of spaceships flying around the universe. The odds of finding an abandoned spaceship by chance was astronomical. Then wouldn’t coming across an abandoned ship be like winning the lottery?

But there it was! At the end of the long hole. A ship was hidden in the large underground space below the surface of the asteroid. It wasn’t just one but three ships!

Of course, the hull was just a bare skeleton but that didn’t matter. It would have some of the necessary mechanical parts to repair the Silver Star.

“Luck hasn’t completely abandoned me.”

–You should be grateful it wasn’t your bad luck.

“It isn’t bad luck. It is the result of trying everything. If I landed on any asteroid after immediately leaving warp orbit then things would be different. It is due to my calmness in the desperate situation while everyone was screaming that enabled the optical scanners to find the metal! Huhuhu, it is the quality of a leader.”

It was lucky that an asteroid like this was nearby. Rapid once again started to talk in a curt voice.

–Isn’t it slightly strange?

“What?”

–The probability of finding an abandoned ship on an asteroid isn’t high. So isn’t it strange that there are three ships hidden in this hole?

–Now that I think about it, that really is strange.

“Think about it later.”

Ark answered without thinking about it.

“Didn’t you hear when leaving the Silver Star? The amount of time wearing this spacesuit is 1 hour maximum. Now there are only 45 minutes left. We have to grab the parts and return to the Silver Star before time runs out. The reason why doesn’t change what we have to do.”

—That’s true.

“So let’s not waste time talking. We’ll split up to look for the necessary parts but it will still take time to search. Kurakan, Ellain, Kalliben, Hedro.”

—Yes, Hyung-nim.

“You guys collect the mechanical parts that can be used. And Rapid, Kaya, Sadain, Slayer and Leon will start searching the hull with me. There might still be some fuel rods that can be used. Therefore the first place to check is the engine room. But also look elsewhere. Don’t you know? Something might appear.”

—Okay! Let’s go!

The team members moved at his words. The abandoned ships were a size similar to the Silver Star or larger. The height was at least 100 metres. But the height of the structure didn’t matter thanks to the weightlessness. Ark and his 8 team members used their jet injection devices and started their search operation.

Ark headed towards the innermost engine room.

“Sheesh, was I too greedy to expect the fuel rods?”

However there weren’t even any broken fuel rods.

“Rapid, how about you?”

—Not here either.

–*Same here.* I think someone already took it.

“It can’t be helped. Next is the cabin and warehouses. If there was an accident then the crew might’ve left some equipment behind when the abandoned it. Even 2 fuel rods are at least 1,000 gold. The financial blow is really no joke. So look carefully.”

Ark said that as he turned around.

“.....!”

Ark’s eyes widened. Floating behind him was a squid.

The Charenjok popped into Ark’s head at the moment. The Charenjok was an octopus type alien. He had the idea that squid might be a cousin species to the Charenjok.

Ark’s eyes met the squid’s at that time. And there was an awkward silence. He stared at the squid for a moment before Ark smiled awkwardly and greeted it.

“H-hello?”

Chi chi chi chi! Chi chi chi chi!

A yellow liquid then shot out from the squid’s mouth. He reflexively leaned down and a message flashed as the liquid hit his shoulder.

-You have been attacked by a corrosive poison!

<Durability of your armour has declined by 3% due to the acid poison>

‘Acid Poison!’

The situation became clear with that message. If the opponent attacked than it was a monster!

“Damn! You scared me because I thought you were the owner of this

abandoned ship!”

Ark rolled and pulled out his sword as he shouted. His sword sparkled as it extended!

Chi chi chi chi! Chi chi chi chi!

The squid also twisted its 10 legs and attacked Ark. The weightlessness of outer space would be a considerable penalty for users who lacked experience in it. It wasn't possible to maintain the centre of balance without any gravity and it was difficult to freely move. However Ark was familiar with this feeling.

‘It is somewhat similar to being underwater!’

And this was one of Ark's specialities since his days in New World. He had wandered beneath the surface of the ocean for a few days fighting jellyfish, lobsters, stingrays, sharks etc. He had mastered the technique of fighting underwater!

‘Only 1 squid.....’

Wiing! Wiing! Buuuuon! Wiing! Pajijijik!

His blue sword started to generate a flashy trajectory in the darkness. The squid also had its own style of fighting. It relentlessly swung its 10 legs and spat corrosive acid. But Ark used the weightlessness to jump on the walls and ceilings as he wielded his lightsaber.

The battle was over 1 minute after it started. The squid was finely cut by the lightsaber.

-Squid-

Category: Space Monster Danger: C

Combat Power: C

The Squid is a monster rarely found on asteroids in the space frontier. It is a monster that lives on the nebula gas found in space. However the Squid's favourite food is a spaceship. To be precise, it is the energy used by a spaceship. Therefore the Squid will sometimes soar into space to catch spaceship passing over. In the early days of the space pioneering age, the Squid was something the pioneers feared most.

The atmosphere is like poison to the Squid so it won't be found on any planets.

* You can gain additional information if you face the same type of monster many times.

That was the data of the monster.

“This monster eats the ether that is used as the ship's fuel? What? Does that mean the Squids ate the fuel rods?”

Ark stared at the shredded Squid with astonished eyes.

Chi chi chi chi! Chi chi chi chi!

Noises were successively heard in the darkness. He flinched and turned to see Squids popping out from the broken hull. There were more than 20 of them! It wasn't just these guys.

–Ark, monster!

–It came here too! Cuttlefish! Cuttlefish!

Slayer and Rapid's voices came over the Nymphe.

‘Dammit, I wanted this to be easily settled.’

“It isn't a cuttlefish but a Squid!”

Ark yelled as he rolled across the floor. Ark's body shot off like a bullet down the passage.

‘No matter how weak they are, dealing with these numbers alone in a place

like this is difficult! I need to join up with the team first! So I should leave before I am trapped!’

Everybody gather outside the spaceships! Baius Shield!”

Chi chi chi chi! Chi chi chi chi!

Ark stopped the liquid flying from everywhere with the Baius Shield and crossed the ship. He destroyed the small barrier formed from Squids blocking his way and exited outside.

–Ugh! T-these guys!

–Damn! Why are there so many squid like creatures?

-Stupid! You should kill the squid not avoid it!

Outside Slayer, Leon, Kaya, Sadain and Rapid were busy fighting the squid. But unlike Ark, they had no experience in fighting in zero gravity. In addition, they had no experience in manipulating the jet injection device while fighting the enemy.

They would lose their centre whenever wielding a weapon. They even lost their balance when blocking the Squid’s attack with a shield. The team couldn’t maintain their posture properly and were being hit by three or four enemies surrounding them. There were also members who used guns like Leon. The moment they fired the gun, they would fly backwards or rotate from the recoil.

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

The only person who fought properly was Rapid. He inserted his leg in a gap in the hull to maintain his centre!

–That guy is truly different!

Kaya exclaimed. However Rapid couldn’t take care of the Squids flocking from every direction with just one pistol. And the Squids’ legs attacked, attacked, attacked!

Bam! Bam! Bam!

They were covered in a herd of Squids and started being beaten up. Fortunately the Squids were only level 50~60.

‘This situation isn’t immediately risky.....’

–*H-Hyung-nim!*”

Then he heard Kurakan’s voice from behind him. Ark’s face stiffened as he turned his head.

Kurakan, Ellain, Kalliben and Hedro were running away from the abandoned spaceship! The problem was the huge number of Squids following behind them like a dark cloud.

‘Oh my god! How many of them were hiding?’

Squids were flowing out everywhere from the abandoned ships. Approximately hundreds of them! It was like a swarm of Squids in the ocean.

‘If there are that many of them, it might not even matter if all team members were experts in space warfare!’

Battling in space wasn’t that simple. It required taking advantage of a 3D space.

It was the first time the team were experiencing such weightlessness so the battle was difficult for them. Let alone the number of creatures heading towards them. If they swarmed like bees in this zero-gravity space then the team members would be instantly turned into bone even if the monsters were only level 50.

‘First I have to find a suitable terrain to fight!’

Ark used the jet device and quickly rotated his body. Then something caught Ark’s eye!

‘.....There!’

A giant pipe 2 metres in diameter had come away from the ship. At the same time, Ark shouted towards his team.

“Below! It is difficult to hit them with your sword or gun when you can’t properly orient your bodies! Now we need to move to a place where their movements are limited! Move to that pipe in the 5 o’clock direction!”

–B-but these guys are.....

“Their levels are low! You won’t die from that much! So don’t worry about avoiding them and focus on manipulating the jets! Head downwards as soon as possible!”

Chiik! Chiik! Puhwaaaaah!

His team started descending after hearing Ark’s yell. And the herd of Squids chased them!

“Khafra Fencing 3rd style! Galaxy Sword!”

Ark’s lightsaber became like a fan as dozens of swords flew out and caused a vortex. The Squids were cut into hundreds of pieces with their legs floating everywhere. Meanwhile Rapid and his team members entered the pipe one by one. And finally Ark arrived!

“Prepare for a skill rampage!”

Ark shouted as he jumped into the pipe. And hundreds of Squid noisily chased Ark into the pipe. Then a smile was pasted onto Ark’s face.

“Now, hunt the Squids! Everyone fire! Galaxy Sword!”

-Storm Bullet!

–Continuous Fire!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

They all poured out their skills. The diameter of the pipe was only 2 metres

so the Squids couldn't avoid the attacks as they were shredded. They flocked to their death! However the Squids were brave. Dozens more quickly entered the pipe.

.....They were rice.

Tu tu tu tu! Tang! Tang! Pepepepeng!

The reason why the Squids were so tough was because maintaining your centre of balance was difficult in space. If they could properly maintain their posture than the level 50 Squids were no match for Ark's team that had an average level of 100.

Entering the narrow pipe was like coming in to become rice! It was like they were feeding Ark's team experience.

'This is a rare opportunity.'

"Summon Golem!"

Ark's Baius Shield transformed into the Golem.

-Well! Do you need my strength? It can't be helped. I'll help you! Is it those Squids?

"Don't go near them!"

Ark grabbed the Golem's feet.

-Ack! You bastard! What are you doing?

"Just stay here and eat the bread!"

Meanwhile bullets were tirelessly being fired.

-The level of the Baius Golem
has risen!

-The level of the Baius Golem

has risen.....

The level 12 Golem gained a tremendous amount of experience from the level 50 Squids! The Golem's level started to steadily increase at a scary rate. The Golem wasn't the only one. Ark and his team's experience went up as they killed dozens of monsters.

-Your level has risen!

And level up!

After continuing for another 10 minutes.

Snap!

Ark kicked the squid parts on the ground.

"Too bad. 10,000 more would've been nice."

All the Squids had been turned into sashimi. On the other hand, his team only received damage in the early stages. It was a perfect, overwhelming victory. All the team members had elated expressions but Rapid was the only one with a serious expression.

"By the way, what is with that expression?"

Rapid raised his head at Ark's words. He stared at Ark for a while before asking with hesitation.

-Did you instantly come up with the plan to deal with the Squids in the pipe?

"So? Why, what's wrong?"

-No, something isn't wrong but.....

"Shall we collect it now?"

Ark gazed around the pipe with a grin. They had shredded hundreds of

Squids in 10 minutes! Thus there were items mixed in with the floating squid parts.

-<Old Mechanical Circuit> has been obtained.

-<Squid's Cell Tissues> has been obtained.....

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

The floor shook and there was a roaring sound from outside. Slayer looked out the pipe and exclaimed excitedly.

–Yes! Squids! Another herd of Squids is coming from out of nowhere.

Kikikiki! Experience is rolling in. Just wait. I'll lead the Squids here. Now!

Over here! I am your enemy! Here.....hehehehek!

Slayer suddenly burst out screaming.

–What? What is that? So much came out....hehehehek!

–Is this a joke? What....hehehehek!

The team members that followed him out all screamed. It was suspicious so Ark and Rapid also exited the pipe. They looked in the direction of the team's gazes and stiffened. Everyone's gazes were facing the Squid. However this Squid was completely different from the ones before. The massive body of a squid was emerging from the ground!

“G-giant squid?”

-The titan class monster ‘Kraken’ has emerged!

At the same time, a red warning message flashed in front of them.

It came from Outer Space

“Captain-nim!”

The interstellar cargo ship Pelican. A sailor turned his head and shouted.

“The injection point is passing.”

“What cargo is being ejected?”

“D-1201! The cargo loaded from Tatuine!”

“D-1201.....!”

The corners of the captain’s eyes shook. A rumour had spread on the Pelican since it started sailing. It was about the cargo D-1201 that they picked up on Tatuine.

-Cargo number: D-1201

Handle with caution! A special security cargo!

These labels were stuck on the container. The captain of the interstellar ship specialized in transporting cargo.

There was a reason he had that background. The captain had grasped the situation the moment he saw the labels on the cargo. The cargo was probably involved with the galactic federation or the military. He didn’t know what the cargo was but it was better to just not be interested in it. However.....

Boom! Bak bak bak bak! Boom! Bak bak bak bak!

Noise started coming from the cargo container. Normally the only sounds that filled the warehouse was the cargo hitting the wall or nails scratching something.

Working in transportation didn't have a lot of risks. They loaded and unloaded cargo and occasionally fought space pirates. Therefore the transportation crew members were surprisingly weak to a situation like this.

"D-did you hear? The sound from the cargo bay?"

"Are aliens hiding in there?"

"No, I heard from the person in charge of the cargo bay that the sound is coming from inside a cargo."

"What on earth are the contents? What is causing such sounds?"

"Damn, how would I know? Doesn't this seem like the Horizon incident? Have you heard about Horizon? A cargo transport ship disappeared during a warp sail. They went missing for a few days and when they returned the entire crew were turned into mummies."

"Why? Why?"

"Who knows. They're all dead."

The sailor looked around then added in a low voice.

"I heard there was a boom from one of the cargo before Horizon disappeared."

An unidentified ghost story spread through the corridor like moisture!

"Captain-nim, perhaps the noise from Tatuine....."

"Don't think about it! I have no interest!"

The captain shook his head.

"We're not pioneers. It is useless to feel curiosity. We just need to deliver the cargo to the destination. We will pass by the coordinates on the way to the Haven planet, eject the cargo and it will be over. It is a maximum of two days. So it is futile to be interested!"

The captain thought to himself with a resolute expression.

‘Scary! Damn, so scary!’

In fact, the captain also couldn’t sleep because he visualized the ghost stories from the crew. But now his sleepless nights were over. The transportation area wasn’t part of the ship’s regular route so they would inject it into the cargo passage closest to the coordinates. And the Pelican finally arrived safely (?) at their destination. Nothing happened despite the noise but the Pelican’s crew considered it the adventure of a lifetime.

“Captain-nim, we did it!”

“It is still too early to tell. Our mission will only end after the cargo is ejected! Confirm the coordinates!”

“Coordinates are confirmed! Electromagnetic charging is complete! Captain-nim, the cargo is ready for ejection!”

The Pelican’s doors opened and a giant barrel soared out. Mounted on the barrel was the D-1201 cargo that caused an urban legend!

‘Goodbye now! That damn cargo!’

“Launch!”

Wiiiiing! Kwaaaah!

The container accelerated due to the electromagnetic power and crossed outer space. And it instantly turned when it reached a certain point.

“Missing?”

Irina made a puzzled expression.

While the 2nd investigation team was looking at more than 20 planets, Irina had been researching the Kero with the 1st team. The hooded man, Katz and Kero were the ones who caused the red rays on Amara that created the magic circle in the Harmadon constellation. The hooded had died when Ark took the

airship to escape!

‘The only remaining clues are the Katz and the Kero. But the Katz clan had been confined on Stael before joining them. They have something to do with the hooded man but there is no evidence they are part of Organization X. But the Kero clan are clearly Organization X’s operatives. The Kero live on a frontier colony. Anyway, the Rama and Aschulat are monitoring my team so it is better to concentrate on the Kero.’

Those were Irina’s thoughts. And she went around the frontier to investigate. They got some clues about the Rama and Aschulat’s monitoring network and were able to escape it to come to Turan. However shocking news was waiting for her.

9 spaceships had been destroyed after only two days! One of them was the Silver Star. It was none other than Ark’s ship. The more puzzling thing was that two days had passed and Ark was still missing. The team units that had been killed by the Rama and the mysterious enemies had already revived in Turan. But so far there was no news about Ark.

“And his teammates are also missing?”

“A couple of team members revived in Turan.”

“What did they say?”

“They don’t know any details so they were killed in the middle of a battle.”

The person speaking was Hawk.

“So there is a possibility they are still alive.....”

Hawk seemed to have expected Irina’s question and replied coldly.

“That might be true. But nothing will change even if they have survived.”

“What do you mean?”

“I said it clearly when everyone was assembled on Turan. I will only accept

the teams that have proven their ability. But the fact that 9 ships were destroyed by unidentified enemies disappointed me. Surprise attacks are common on the space frontier. If they don't have that type of crisis management skills then they've already failed."

"You mean to discard them?"

"Discard? That is a fairly emotional term you're using. I heard that Ensign Irina-nim is so cold that you could make an android cry."

Hawk looked at her with interested eyes.

"I'm not saying that I want to abandon them. They have already lost their ships. Even with the insurance, it will take a considerable amount of time to buy back a ship. We have no time to wait until then."

"Ark-nim's death hasn't been confirmed yet."

"But he didn't return on time. I gave all teams two days and those that went to planets even further away than Ark have returned. Even if he is still alive, Ark is already disqualified."

"He is a pioneer that Marquis Martin considered exceptional."

"All team members are the same."

Hawk replied shortly.

"There are no exceptions. It doesn't matter if Ark has received Marquis Martin's favour!"

And he turned his body so the wide cloak with the blue skull was shown. The embroidery gave off a vaguely menacing atmosphere.

"We don't have a lot of time. If we don't discard people then we can't move forward. And the destination has already been set. We have to throw away our colleagues."

Hawk strode to the doors that split apart. 11 people were in front of him.

They were the teams who came back from the mission and surprise attacks alive. Hawk's mouth rose as he saw them.

“Be prepared. Depart for the following destination.”

‘Why on earth hasn't Ark-nim made any contact?’

A sigh flowed from Irina's mouth.

At that moment, Ark.....

“Waaaaah! D-damage!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

.....He wasn't in a position to contact anyone.

–Hyung-nim, danger! Everyone take cover!

–Damn squid! Eat this!

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Gunshots subsequently burst out through the darkness! A blue light also flashed between a huge shadow. It was a giant squid with a body size of 30~40 metres. It was the monster called Kraken that was the ancestor of the Squids. This guy didn't just have a large body.

Titing! Titing! Titing!

The body was covered in an armour like epidermis so the bullets bounced off it! It was literally a squid wearing armour.

“Don't shoot blindly! Focus and attack one point!”

–Even if you tell us to focus.....

Buwaaaaang!

At that moment a huge, thick object fell towards the party. The huge objects falling was the Kraken's legs! The body might be long but it had massive

legs several metres in diameter.

–Dammit! These squid legs! Iron Wall!

Slayer raised his shield and shouted. But in the next moment, Slayer flew back dozens of metres into a wall. It was the same with the other team members. The Kraken swung its 10 legs crazily so it was hard for the party to defend, let alone attack.

Members who used firearms like Kurakan and Leon could only fire as they ran away. Therefore they couldn't concentrate on hitting one point and the bullets just bounced off the Kraken's armour. On the other hand, the Kraken's tentacles went peng! Peng! Peng! Those who were hit would become rice cakes like Slayer who bravely confronted it.

-Kuuck.....damn.....

Slayer groaned and shook from the wall he flew into. Fortunately the actual damage wasn't that large. The Kraken's attack wasn't weak. One leg contained the weight of the huge body that was several tons. The weight itself was a destructive power. It was impossible to be safe after being hit by that leg. However, this was space so it was weightless.

Ark's party was deprived of their weight and floated dozens of metres in the air. It also meant that the impact would be as light as a feather so there wasn't large damage. It was the principle behind why it was so hard to destroy an object floating in air.

'But this weightlessness isn't an advantage!'

It was the reason why this team members were wandering. Ark had obtained Spacewalk from cleaning the Silver Star so he had relatively free movements. However, this was the other team members first experience!

They could use the jet device to move but they weren't skilled in moving freely in a combat situation. Being unable to move freely in battle was a deadly penalty!

‘Continuing to fight like this will be suicide!’

He confirmed that after 10 minutes of fighting. In the meantime, the Kraken’s health had only decreased by 15% at the most. On the other hand, the team’s health had been cut down by 40~50%. They couldn’t maintain their centre of balance and struggled to avoid the Kraken’s legs so the result was obvious.

‘There are two ways to deal with a high defense monster like the Kraken. The first way is to find a weakness or to pour out attacks that would overcome its defense.’

But even if he managed to find a weak point, they weren’t in a situation to attack a small gap. The remaining way was to pour out attacks to overcome the defense. The first method was better but it wasn’t easy with teammates unfamiliar with weightlessness.

‘The only way possible is to establish a terrain advantage. A place like the pipe where I lured the Squids to wipe them out with concentrated firepower. And there is an appropriate place here!’

Ark’s eyes looked towards the top of the Kraken! They were currently inside a hole in the surface of the asteroid.

‘If I trap it in this hole.....’

–Ark! Wake up! On the right!

The Nymphe vibrated and Rapid’s voice was heard. He flinched and turned to see a huge Kraken leg flying towards the ground. Ark lowered his upper body and glided along the ground. It was the method of applying Swamp Walking to the weightlessness!

Buwaaaaang!

The Kraken’s leg passed over his head!

“Attack him to give me some time!”

Ark operated the jet device and crossed the space. He reached the area where

the Squids' corpses were floating and a blue light flashed from his hand as he started carving complex characters in the air.

“Come out, Shire! Rune Carving, Ikram! Ikram! Ikram! Ikram!”

It was the Ikram rune he learnt from the pyramid! A blurry shape that looked like the ghost of Anubis rose in the air as soon as the character was carved. Then it was then sucked into the body of a Squid that had been turned into rags. A red shape then burst out from the Squid! It was a Hellhound with the head of a squid and the body of a dog.

‘Impossible.....’

A squid-headed dog. However there was no time to appreciate the new creature.

Kung! Kung! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepeng! Kung! Kung!

There was no time to rest as gunfire kept on going off. It was the sound of his teammates struggling one-sidedly against the Kraken.

“Bite!”

Ark quickly pulled out grenades and handed them to the Hellhounds. Once again, the Hellhounds were creatures born anew from flesh that Ark killed. The Hellhound inherited a portion of the sacrifice's stats and characteristics. For example, the fish head that could swim freely in water or the dog's keen sense of smell. And the head right now was a space squid!

“Go!”

Ark pulled the safety pins and shouted towards the Kraken. At that moment, 5 Hellhounds flew towards the Kraken like missiles. The head of the squid meant the Hellhounds had the Squid's ability to quickly walk across space. And the moment a Hellhound collided with the Kraken!

Pepeng!

The grenade the Hellhound was biting self-destructed! The explosion caused

the Kraken to stumbled and step back. But that was just the start. The other Hellhounds heading towards the Kraken hit the same area.

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

There were explosions one after another! There was a hollow in the Kraken's armour from where 5 grenades had burst and its health had noticeably declined. It still had a lot of health but this was the first attack that dealt a lot of damage so it turned its body towards Ark in fury.

“Now! Everybody climb up the hole!”

–Y-you?

“Follow me right now! Armour armament!”

The space distorted and his battle suit appeared at Ark's cry. The moment the battle suit wrapped around Ark's body.

“Armed Stealth!”

A intense light burst out in the darkness! At the same time, the Kraken screamed and struggled. It was natural. The Kraken probably hadn't experienced light for a few hundred years so the light caused it intense pain! It was like sticking a needle in the eye. While the Kraken frantically swung its legs, Ark's tem flew up the hole.

Kukung! Kuwaaaaaaaah!

When they had reached the middle part, there was a roar as the Kraken caught up. This part of the hole had a diameter of 10 metres so the Kraken's appearance was like fear itself! It was like they were sandwiched between the Kraken and the rock wall as its tentacles got closer. No, the Kraken's tentacles were heading towards Ark.

“Hyper Booster!”

He waited for the right moment and used Hyper Booster! Ark's body shot like a bullet out of the hole. His 10 teammates also gathered around the hole

as they exited. And the Kraken was about to come out of the hole. Ark shouted as he flew towards his team.

“Now! Pour all your firepower towards that hole!”

This was Ark’s mission. It was an operation similar to luring the Squids into the pipe and killing them in droves! The Kraken was stuck in a narrow hole so it couldn’t freely move its legs. In addition, his team members didn’t need to worry about any leg damage and could focus on attacking.

–That’s right! This is like when we trapped the Squids in the pipe!

–Shoot! Smash it before it comes up!

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepeng!

Various skills and bullets were poured out!

A roaring sound and flames relentlessly soared from the hole. The Kraken moved its body and tried to swing 2~3 tentacles but it couldn’t exit the hole under the concentrated attacks. It was the same for the body.

“Fire Eagle P-40!”

His shotgun Fire Eagle that he used after a long time!

Ark helped maintain the pressure on the Kraken with his shotgun as they pushed it down. In addition, there was the buff from Kaya’s battle suit!

-The gene activated Esper battle suit Optisian has been triggered.

<The attack and defense of everybody in the party will increase by 15%>

Attack and defense increased by 15%!

-70%.....63%

.....54%.....

The Kraken's health quickly started going down under the team's violent onslaught. On the other hand, the Kraken was trapped in the hole and couldn't properly hit them.

'That's it! If it continues like this then it will be an easy win!'

When Ark was convinced of their victory.

Hwaaaaack!

A huge stream of liquid suddenly emerged from the hole. The identity of the yellow liquid was the acid poison the Squids' squirted! But it was on a completely different scale when the Kraken used it. Several tons worth of yellow liquid shot out from the hole.

Chi chi chi chi!

When the liquid hit the team, smoke and a common message appeared.

-You have been attacked by a corrosive poison!

<Durability of your armour has declined by 3% due to the acid poison>

-*Wah! Poison!*

-*Avoid it! If it hits then it will melt your equipment!*

The team members screamed and scattered all over the place.

"You fools! Don't withdraw!"

Ark yelled in a desperate voice but it was already too late.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwang! Syu syu syu syu syu!

There was the sound of rocks being crushed and a huge shadow flew out of the hole. Ark looked up at the shadow with an upset expression. The Kraken

was floating dozens of metres above with ten legs. The Kraken was less bulky than when they were fighting underground. Tons of liquid had been pumped out of the body so its speed increased as it shot out of the hole.

“D-dammit! This winning fight.....”

Ark frowned as he looked up at the Kraken. Now it had less than 20% health left. However the odds couldn't be guaranteed anymore once it left the hole. No, it was now unfavourable to Ark's team.

They couldn't fight the Kraken properly in the underground space but he was relaxed due to the Kraken's space constraints. But now those space constraints had also disappeared.

The Kraken was now floating in space. The Kraken could now fly through the universe freely! Of course, the jet device meant the team could move around but it was like a person on a hang glider fighting against an eagle.

‘But I have no choice but to try it!’

Ark imagined the attacks and grabbed his lightsaber tightly. However the Kraken didn't move. It just floated in the air and looking in a different direction.

–*What? That guy?*

–*Where is it looking?*

The nervous team muttered with confusion. Then Ark felt a sinister feeling as he followed the Kraken's gaze.

‘The direction it is looking in.....Silver Star! Oh my god, the Silver Star is in that direction!’

He recalled the information window for the mini-sized Kraken, the Squids.

The Squids were monsters that devoured the ether fuel of a ship. If the Kraken had the same appetite as a Squid then the reason it stopped attacking and looked in the direction of the Silver Star was because it sensed ether.

It had found more coveted prey than Ark's team.

'If it moves to the Silver Star than this situation will become more complicated! The Silver Star has already suffered damage from the battle and the crash landing. In this state, if it is damaged even more than it might not recover. In the worst case.....no! Now, I have to end this here!'

"Attack! Don't let its mind go someplace else!"

Ark shouted in an urgent voice.

The Kraken was the one who reacted to his voice first. It turned away from the Silver Star and its huge body fell towards the team like a thunderbolt. The team members raising their guns and swords screamed in unison.

-Wah! I-it is falling!

-A-avoid it!

Kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

It was followed by an explosion!

The Kraken that was dozens of metres large hit the ground. And Ark and his team members.....

-I-I lived!

Slayer gulped and stuttered. Slayer wasn't the only one. Ark and his team members were all gathered around Slayer. They were able to survive the Kraken's giant body thanks to Slayer and Sadain's joint operation.

When the Kraken had fallen, Slayer had reflexively lifted his shield. However, the Kraken was a monster that weighted dozens of tons. Regardless of whether he was carrying a sword, his body would just be flattened like a mouse rolled over by a carriage. Slayer could withstand the tremendous weight due to the vertical spear under it. Just before the Kraken landed on the party, Sadain had placed his spear under the shield to create a type of pole.

The pole with Slayer's shield formed
a roof with a '△' space underneath it.

This allowed Ark's team to withstand the Kraken's weight. This was due to
Slayer and Sadain's experience. However their sighs of relief didn't last long.

Jjajjak! Jjajjak! Jajajajak!

Cracks started to spread. The shield and spear was in a '丄' That's what is
looked like. Now the Kraken weighing dozens of tons had fallen on the '丄'
so cracks started to spread as the ground became unstable and started
crumbling.

-Hik! The land is giving way!

-Dammit! Avoid it! At this rate we'll fall back into the hole with the rocks!

-Damn! How can we avoid it when being crushed by the giant squid?

The team members had taken refuge in a small space between the Kraken and
the ground so they couldn't escape! The hole finally started to collapse
around the edges.

A tremendous amount of gravel, dirt and rocks started pouring down! The
team tried to avoid the dirt and rocks. In the end, the team members fell down
the hole with the dirt and rocks.

Ku ku ku ku! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Ku ku ku ku! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

'No! I can't fall.....'

Ark desperately used the jet device to avoid the rocks. The Kraken's body
stopped blocking the hole. Once Ark's team members fell, the Kraken had no
interest in them anymore and flew off. Needless to say, it was flying off in the
direction of the Silver Star!

'If I'm stuck in the hole then the Silver Star will be hit! I have to stop that
guy!'

However it wasn't easy to avoid the dirt and rocks with just the jet device on his space suit. No, the rocks hit the jet device so it wouldn't move properly.

'This is bad! If the jet device doesn't work properly.....'

An idea then popped into Ark's head.

"Yes, it is this! Come out, Super Board!"

The air board sprang out of his bag. Ark grabbed the air board with both hands as the house sized boulder fell towards him.

Ark concentrated his weight on one side as the air board rotated like a spin top and he moved to the side, avoiding the rock. He repeated that behaviour a few times until a large space without any rocks or dirt stretched out in front of him.

"Acceleration! Dash! "

The moment Ark concentrated all his weight on the front of the air board! The air board quickly shot out of the hole. He floated 10 metres in the air and looked down to see his teammates buried in dirt and rocks.

"Hey, is everybody okay? Are you alive?"

—Ugh! I'm alive.

—The weightlessness means the damage from the rocks is limited.

—But we can't move because we're buried in dirt.

"Dammit!"

Ark shouted angrily.

"It can't be helped. I have to block him alone."

—What You bastard! Are you abandoning us? There's 10 more minutes until we've spent an hour out here! We'll get the space disease! You need to rescue us first!

Slayer snapped after hearing Ark's voice first. He really couldn't figure out the atmosphere.

“You idiot! Haven't you grasped the situation yet? It is aiming for the Silver Star! If it reaches the Silver Star then everyone here will get space sickness!”

–Hik! That guy is heading towards the Silver Star?

–I know the situation. We'll take care of ourselves so you go head and block it. We will escape from here as quickly as possible and join you.

Those were Rapid's words. However Ark was already following behind the Kraken. Currently both of the Silver Star's turrets were shattered. It couldn't even fly let alone activate the shield. If the Kraken ate its energy then the Silver Star would just be a pile of junk. It would end up just like the abandoned airships.

“Don't make me laugh! I managed to survive Valencia and the Red Slaughterer's surprise attacks while protecting the Silver Star! It can't be destroyed by this squid! I will use whatever method it takes to protect it!”

Ark grinded his teeth and made the air board accelerate. He flew at full speed and saw the Silver Star on the horizon after 1 minute. And the huge form of the Kraken was approaching the Silver Star.

–Hyung-nim! It is a monster! A monster is heading towards the Silver Star!

At the same time, Milan's scream came through the Nymphe.

“I know! And....”

Ark looked at the upcoming Kraken and grabbed his lightsaber.

“.....I am behind it! Khafra Fencing 3rd style, Galaxy Sword!”

Dozens of lightsabers flew out like a fan! The blue swords flew around the Kraken's body and caused a chain explosion. The Kraken's eyes moved from the Silver Star towards Ark. The ten tentacles flew towards him!

‘I’m the only one who can stop him now! If I don’t stop him then it will be the end for the Silver Star! I have to stop it! Pay attention! Pay attention! Pay attention! Concentrate Ark!’

Ark lay face down on the air board. There was no gravity or air resistance against his body so the air board accelerated further. The air board when he was in this position was surprisingly stable. There was no gravity so the air board could turn over 180 degrees..

Syu syu syu syu! Syu syu syu syu! Syu syu syu syu!

Left or right, turn! Up and down, turn! Ark flew like a swallow between the tentacles. And a flash of blue light followed his trajectory!

Wiing! Pajijiji! Wiing! Pajijiji!

-A-awesome!

–Fighting alone against that monster.....

Milan and Hegel spoke over the Nymphe. However Ark was the one most surprised. The Kraken was a titan class monster. It meant dozens of people and heavy weapons like tanks would need to be mobilized to fight it. Yet Ark alone was enough to push such a monster.

‘I should’ve fought on my air board.’

The reason he could do this was due to the air board. So far Ark hadn’t thought about using the air board in the universe. But when he actually tried it, the air board seemed to be an item made for the universe as its performance doubled.

Its ability wasn’t that big on a planet with gravity but this was outer space where there was no guarantee and it could fly freely like a spaceship. Of course, the prone position was embarrassing and it was difficult to steer but if he mastered it then it would truly be freedom! It gave him the strength for a fight against the flying Kraken. His concentration that had increased to its

limit caused a miracle like battle scene.

However.....

‘This isn’t enough to push it!’

There was a crucial reason why Ark could attack the Kraken so one-sidedly! It was because the Kraken was ignoring Ark’s attacks. That’s right. Right now the Kraken wasn’t fighting Ark.

The Kraken was just flying towards its more coveted prey, the Silver Star. The tentacles swinging towards Ark was just like swatting an annoying mosquito. No, Ark’s presence was indeed like a mosquito for the Kraken.

It was an issue of firepower rather than skills. Ark, Slayer, Leon, Sadain etc., the attacks from the 10 people had been enough to slowly reduce the Kraken’s health. In other word, Ark could only cause 1/10th of the damage and his continuous attacks for 1 minute didn’t even shave away 5% of its health. It was like using a short dagger to stab an elephant. Such attacks were impossible to stop the elephant’s rush.

Despite Ark’s desperate attacks!

Kukung!

The Kraken eventually hovered over the Silver Star. The tentacles wrapped around the Silver Star. And a blue stream started flowing from the Silver Star towards its mouth.

–Hyung-nim, the Silver Star’s energy is being reduced at a fast rate!

Hegel’s scream was heard!

-12%.....12.5%
.....13%.....

At the same time, the sight of the Kraken’s health recovering caught Ark’s eye. The Kraken was absorbing energy from the Silver Star and regaining its

health.

“Eat this! Sonic Sword! Galaxy Sword! Shield Emission!”

The distressed Ark relentlessly threw attacks at the Kraken. But Ark's attacks alone weren't able to keep up with the Kraken's recovery rate. Anyone who played a game would've experienced this at least once. The desperation of trying to deal damage faster than the boss monster can recover.

Ark felt like that right now. His Force skills were unable to keep up with the Kraken's recovery rate. If this continued then it would be restored to 100% perfect health. Then it would be impossible to stop! Ark's Silver Star would soon be shattered.

‘No! It can't be! The Silver Star is the one thing I can't lose! No, we won't be able to escape from the asteroid even if the energy is the only thing absorbed! I have to prevent it from absorbing the energy! But attacking it from the outside isn't keeping up with its recovery rate. Then.....’

Ark bared his teeth and turned his head. Ark's gaze had turned towards its mouth where it was sucking the energy!

‘I'll shred your stomach!’

“Super Board! Dash!”

There was no reason to think about it. Ark rushed through the air on his air board the moment he made a decision. And he rushed into the stream of energy and surfed it down into the Kraken! He entered its mouth.

The Kraken was confused as he entered its mouth. But it quickly noticed the situation and acid started rising in its throat. The acidic solution rushed out of the throat like a wave!

“It is already too late! Armed Binding Sword!”

Chwa chwa chwa chwa! Chwa chwa chwa chwa!

Dozens of lights emerged from the battle suit! The lights ejected embedded

into the ceiling of the mouth. Ark pulled it with his left arm and clung to the ceiling. The acid solution flooded out under his foot. Ark quickly glanced around while moving off the ceiling.

‘I entered! The exterior has a hard epidermis so attacking inside the stomach will naturally deal more damage. But the amount of time I can spent in the stomach is limited due to the acid solution. If I’m hit by the acid then only my bones would be left. So I need to find another place to deal a fatal blow! For example.....there!’

Ark’s gaze turned towards one area. A hole on the other that was approximately 1 metres in size and a blue colour!

‘That’s obviously the heart! Yes, the Kraken is still a creature no matter how large it is. I just need to smash the heart!’

“Khafra Fencing 3rd style! Galaxy....ack! W-what the?”

Ark was about to wield his sword when he suddenly burst out screaming. The Kraken was a titan class monster so it wasn’t that easy. The moment he tried to wield his sword in the oesophagus? The gastric tract? The muscles Ark was clinging to suddenly shrank and began to press against Ark. The pressure was so strong he could barely move one finger! At the same time, a yellow liquid started flowing from the lining!

-You have been attacked by a corrosive poison!

<Durability of your armour has declined by 3% due to the acid poison>

-You have been attacked by a corrosive poison!

<Durability of your armour has declined by 3% due to the acid poison>.....

The message continuously popped up!

‘Oh my god This bastard, it is trying to digest me!’

The red light continuously flashed without giving him time to think. The durability of his equipment would fly away as well as ‘death + Silver Star destruction.’

He would resurrect at the Fairy naked. But he couldn’t even move a finger let alone swing his sword thanks to the Kraken’s sphincter! He would become food in the stomach.

‘No! I can’t because the squid’s poo! Something.....’

Then something popped into Ark’s head. Atmosphere would be like poison to the Squids so they wouldn’t be found on any planets. His Clairvoyance ability had identified the weakness of the Squids. The Kraken was a Squid that evolved so it should still have the same weaknesses. Then.....

“Jet device, maximum output! Use up the remaining oxygen!”

At the same time, a white gas emerged from the bottom of his space suit. The fuel used for the jet device was liquid oxygen. It used oxygen to get momentum. In other words, the spacesuit was now spurting oxygen. And oxygen was poison to a space monster like the Kraken!

Kuwaaaaaaaah!

The Kraken shrieked and started struggling. The pressure of the sphincter loosened and Ark was tossed side to side.

“Now! Hyper Booster!”

Flames spurted from the heels of his battle suit. He shot forward using Hyper Booster and quickly started moving towards the heart. And the moment he arrived in front of the heart!

“18 Barrage!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

His fists moved like a quick fire gun! Blue liquid poured from the heart with every hollow his fist caused. And with his fist hit it for the final time, the Kraken's heart burst like a balloon. The giant squid wound around the Silver Star exploded and left Ark in the centre!

-Your level has risen!

-Your level has risen!

-Your level has risen.....

The message flashed like crazy in front of him. The message appeared 9 times! It was increased by the maximum number of levels. The party members were 2 kilometres away and buried so Ark alone gobbled up the experience from a titan class monster.

That wasn't all. It was a law that compensation would always follow hardship. Several items were scattered where the Kraken's body was.

-Unknown Scale Pants (???)

Item Type: Light Armour (Pants) Wearer Restriction: Level 100

Defense: 60 Durability: 2580

Pants made from a light material that space pioneers used a long time ago. It seems to be the leather of a monster since scales are attached to it.

However, it is impossible to know what monster the leather came from. Outstanding pioneers can sense the unusual power in these pants but there is no clear understanding of it. Item Analysis will need to be used to

determine what power is hidden in this equipment. It is best to experience everything!

※ Item effect is still undisclosed.

<Item Analysis Lv. 2 required>

‘Ohu! An unidentified item?’

Ark’s eyes came alive. An unidentified item meant it definitely came with an attached option. It was at least a magic item. The unusual thing about Galaxian was that unidentified items could still be used.

However, only the base stats of the item would be applied. If he didn’t have Item Analysis, steadily using the item would reveal some of its hidden performances. Strength + 1, Defense +1 , Stamina +1 after a fixed period of time and Defense +1 again after a certain amount of time passed. Therefore there was no need to waste money on Item Analysis.....

The problem was time. A significant amount of time would be required to reveal all of an item’s options. If they levelled up fast and found an unidentified item in the early stages of the game then they wouldn’t need to waste money on identification. However Ark didn’t need to worry about that. Hegel was a professional Scavenger who had experience in this field!

‘I just need to get this to Hegel.’

The next thing that caught his eye was a glowing flesh and something that looked like a hammer.

Kraken’s Cell Tissue (Rare)

Item Type: Study Material

The cell tissue found from the corpse of the rare space monster the Kraken. Space monsters often develop special abilities in order to adapt to harsh environments. If the tissue cells of this monster is studied then a variety of

information can be obtained. In some cases an unexpected use might be found.

However, this requires research skills.

-Destruction Hammer (Rare)

Item Type: Two-handed Hammer Wearer Restriction: Level 80

Attack: 35~70 Durability: 32100

The hammer is a strong destructive weapon that has been used for thousands of years. However, use of it gradually disappeared until boosters were attached to maximize speed and damage and it started to regain the prestige of the past. The biggest advantage of the hammer is that it is easy to attach a variety of secondary equipment. A number of modifications have been invented for the hammer included EMPS generators or hammers specifically designed to destroy shields and block bullets.

The Destruction Hammer will cause an explosion the moment it hits the enemy.

<Strength +15, Stamina +20>

* Special Option (Aesthetics of Destruction): When activated, all enemies hit by the enemy will suffer an additional 10~20 explosive damage for 1 minute.

Cool down time: 2 hours

Rare cell tissue and a rare hammer! He also found three general long swords, daggers and guns. The monster had dropped 6 pieces of loot. As expected, the loot coincided with the difficulty of hunting a titan class monster.

“But what is this?”

Ark who was packing the loot looked at a large object placed on the Silver

Star. It was a long, black pouch like item approximately 5~6 metres. It looked like food waste but a blue gas was pouring from it unlike other organs.

‘This is similar to the blue gas that the Kraken absorbed earlier from the Silver Star.....’

Ark touched it and an information window surfaced.

-You have found the <Kraken’s Energy Storage>

The Kraken absorbs energy and stores it long term. This Kraken has lived for hundreds of years so it has stored a significant amount of ether in its body. In the universe, energy equalled money. Ether is a very expensive energy used in all spaceships so some pioneers deliberately hunt the Kraken for its energy storage.

* The energy storage has been damaged and ether is leaking.

98,000.....97,000.....96,000.....

“Heok! T-this is an energy storage?”

Ark burst out with confusion as he read the information window.

In fact, Ark wasn’t pleased even when he got rid of the Kraken. Currently the Silver Star was on Asteroid E-2036 because of a problem with the fuel rods. He had prepared counter measures but Ark still needed 2 fuel rods. But the Kraken’s attack had absorbed the ether in the remaining two fuel rods.

There were two ruptured fuel rods and two empty fuel rods so ‘2-2=0.’ In the end, the situation was the same as before. Of course, there were ways to solve it but they required too much time and money. Yet there was a lump of ether in front of him! The problem was that the ether was quickly reducing.

“Dammit! I wouldn’t have broken the inside so much if I knew the Kraken had something like this! No, now it not the time! Milan, Hegel, quickly take out the fuel rods on the ship! This is money! We can’t lost even one more bit

of energy! Hurry!”

Ark shouted loudly.

Syyyyyyyy, pepepepeng!

All of a sudden, something fell from outer space at a huge rate and landed a few hundred feet away from the Silver Star. A small container box was unexpectedly lodged in the ground of the asteroid.

-Cargo number: D-1201

Handle with caution! A special security cargo!

These phrases were attached to the container.

The Man called God

‘These thieves!’

He thought as he looked at the menu.

40,000 won for a plate of pasta. Some of the quality food cut by a knife went for over 200,000 won. Drinking water cost 10,000~20,000 won. It cost extra if taxes were included.

It was a mystery what alternative ingredients they used to make it cost so much.

-This restaurant, it is good but a little expensive.

He read that on the internet but.....

‘What is a little? Do this bastards even know Hangul? This is very expensive!’

Once again, Hyun-woo was the director of a large company. The annual staff salary was at a level difficult to imagine. Hyun-woo’s eating habits changed a lot thanks to that.

Previously he just ate kimbap. Sometimes he was desperate enough to stir in protein powder. But now he could afford to walk into a good restaurant. However his common sense still applied when talking about the price. The price was to the extent that they needed to use an unknown recipe or spice that had never been heard of!

However Hyun-woo wasn’t in a position to complain.

First, his money wasn’t being used to buy this food anyway. If he had to explain, Hyun-woo helped someone a while ago and they were insistent on repaying him. This restaurant had been reserved in advance so he had used this opportunity to eat here. Therefore he had no reason to complain over the

expensive food.

But the second reason was the more important one.

“Is it unreasonable?”

“It is unreasonable.”

“We can go somewhere else.”

“It was a joke. It’s not often but I do eat rice in a place like this.”

Hyun-woo was a man of South Korea. As a man of Korea, he couldn’t say anything else in front of a pretty girl. Hyun-woo scratched his head and said.

“.....I wanted to look good but I’m not actually paying the meal expenses today. A person I knew made the reservation in advance. So you don’t have to worry about the burden. And today is a memorable day.”

“What day is today?”

“It’s the first.”

“First?”

“We didn’t really know each other that well when we visited the Taek Mountains. And I was a bit distracted when we met at the hospital a few days ago. Afterwards we only talked over the phone a few times. So this is our first formal date. That means it is the first day dating.”

“I’ve never dated someone before.”

“Then this is the first day for both of us.”

“What is that?”

“Anyway, is there any sense in hiding my heart anymore?”

In fact, Hyun-woo was quite surprised. Hyun-woo never imagined that he could say something like this. But the first time hadn’t been too difficult. After he unintentionally confessed in the hospital, Hyun-woo was

surprised he could talk so calmly. Of course, he knew that she also harboured a crush on him. Why else would she wear a nice dress to eat a meal at a good restaurant?

‘I knew she was a beauty.....’

Cho Min-sun was wearing a dress and light makeup. It was like a warrior putting on a combat suit. He was still dissatisfied with the food prices but he thought it was worth it just seeing her. Cho Min-sun was also very considerate.

“I’ll have the pasta with clams.”

She had sense to order the cheapest item on the menu! Hyun-woo was so touched by Cho Min-sun’s consideration that he ordered the same thing.

“Feel free to order something a little more expensive.....”

“I originally like pasta. It’s not like I need to eat expensive food.”

“That’s right.”

“By the way, what on earth happened?”

“Huh? What?”

“Where are you now?”

“Where? I’m here.”

“Are you going to keep on fooling around? You know what I am asking.”

Cho Min-sun said as she sent him a sharp look.

At any rate, a man was a strange animal. Her face looked so pretty.....he wanted to continue but she was serious. Hyun-woo blushed at her serious expression and scratched his head as he replied.

“Right now I’m on Asteroid E-2036.”

“E-2036? Why there.....?”

“I was attacked by the Rama while completing my mission on Impeltus. We managed to escape but the ship was having problems during the warp voyage so we crash landed on the asteroid.”

“So you should send a rescue request.”

“No, the problem will be resolved shortly. I found my own way. But where did you hear that I have a problem?”

In fact, today the first one to call was Cho Min-sun. The battle with the Kraken had just ended and he was about to eat dinner when her call came. And she started asking about the Silver Star. Hyun-woo had some time so he decided to have dinner with her and explain the circumstances.

“I heard from Hawk.”

“Hawk? Then Min-sun ssi met with Hawk?”

“Yes, I joined up with the 2nd investigation team a short while ago. That was when I heard that Hyun-woo was missing. In fact, Hyun-woo’s unit wasn’t the only one attacked by an enemy. Most of the units were also attacked by the Rama or unidentified enemy. There are 11 units who returned safely. 9 units either lost the spaceship or were killed in battle. The 1st investigation team finished faster than scheduled and is going to join the 2nd investigation team. Everyone resurrected within 2 days but their spaceships were destroyed so Hawk expelled them from the team.”

This was the first time he heard that other units had received surprise attacks.

However Hyun-woo had suffered a lot in New World. Hyun-woo sensed something the moment he heard Cho Min-sun’s explanation. The person scheming behind the surprise attacks.

The team contained 20 units. Even if 10 were killed, they were still divided into factions. It would be difficult for them to follow Hawk’s orders, even if he was 1 of the Seven Swords.

So Hawk decided to reduce the numbers. With those numbers then he could control them properly. Their strength would be affected in the long run but right now it was better.

The units of the two factions might conflict with each other. Even if there was a worry about fewer people, it was better to have soldiers easy to control. The purpose of this mission wasn't to exterminate the enemy but to obtain information about the magic circle and antimatter first.

‘Still, isn't he quite daring?’

“Hawk has already started the next mission.”

Then Cho Min-sun opened her mouth again.

“I don't know the details but he seems to have found a suspicious place. Hawk is going to lead the remaining units there. The problem is that Hawk has removed all units killed in battle from the team. It is the same for Ark-nim as well. I know that Ark-nim hasn't been killed in battle but it won't be any different since you didn't arrive on time.”

“Did he formally report it to the federation?”

“No.”

“Then it doesn't matter.”

“What do you mean? It doesn't matter? Are you saying it is okay if you're kicked from the investigation team?”

“That's impossible.”

Of course Hyun-woo had no intention of leaving the team. Why would he give up a quest like this? He wasn't going to leave the team like Hawk wanted.

“There's no need to worry. Hawk.....”

Hyun-woo was replying when his eyes narrowed. Someone had actually been

distracting Hyun-woo for a while. There was a couple a few tables away staring at Cho Min-sun. But while he was talking, the woman suddenly got up and approached Hyun-woo's table.

‘Who is it? Does she know Min-sun ssi?’

Hyun-woo didn't know the person. But the face was strangely familiar.

He felt like he had met her somewhere before. However Hyun-woo couldn't remember meeting her. It was extremely rare for Hyun-woo to meet women. If he met another beauty apart from Cho Min-sun then he would remember.

‘But somewhere.....ah! Yes! That woman!’

He remembered when he saw the wine glass in her hand. Hyun-woo stood up and raised his voice.

“Min-sun ssi, danger!”

“Huh? What.....?”

Min-sun ssi asked as she turned around.

The woman holding the glass suddenly lost her balance and spilled her drink on Cho Min-sun. No, she didn't lose her balance but deliberately fell.

At the same time, the scene from the charity party to help overseas refugees was superimposed in Hyun-woo's head. A similar thing had occurred then.

Someone had deliberately tried to spill a drink on Cho Min-sun's dress! That woman who poured the drink was the same one right now. She tried to the same technique half a year ago so she was very creative but this time she succeeded.

Hyun-woo looked at the woman with an angry expression and shouted.

“What on earth is this?”

“Omo! I'm sorry but what can I do? Huh? Aren't you Min-sun?”

“Uh, unni.....”

Confusion spread on Cho Min-sun's face. Hyun-woo was also confused. She was her older sister? Hyun-woo looked between the shivering Cho Min-sun and the woman with a puzzled expression.

"A date? Hmmm, he is a fine looking man. Do you also have the ability to charm a handsome man? Is it hereditary?"

"Look here!"

"Guest-nim, is something wrong?"

A waiter came rushing after hearing Hyun-woo yell. Just as Hyun-woo was opening his mouth. Cho Min-sun shook her head.

"Hyun-woo ssi, please stop."

"But....."

"It's okay. It's a request. I don't want any trouble. It's not a big deal so let's stop. Hyun-woo ssi, I'm sorry but I'll be back."

Cho Min-sun spoke with a determined expression. The waiter quickly handed her a towel and guided her to the bathroom. The woman spoke to Hyun-woo after Cho Min-sun left with the waiter.

"Do you know who our father is?"

"I've heard about it. What does that have to do with you?"

"No matter what. Her father is also my father. But not all children are the same. That bitch is the child of a mistress. Do you understand? She is common. That child's birth is a mistake. That's why I called her a bitch."

"What do you expect me to say?"

"Hoh, you're not surprised? I guess you know already. You have no idea what she is capable of. But this is unexpected. It is better if you give up. This is an advice and warning."

"I'll also give you advice and a warning."

Hyun-woo slowly raised his head and said.

“You better return to your seat before I get angry.”

“Hul, look at that pride.....”

“Min-sun ssi’s sister! I’m only going to put up with it once.”

Hyun-woo stared at the woman with flames pouring from his eyes. He didn’t know if it was his look or she had finished her work but the woman snubbed him and returned to her seat. His fist involuntarily clenched as he stared at her back. It wasn’t because he was insulted.

‘I don’t know anything about Min-sun ssi!’

She told him that she was the child of a mistress but Hyun-woo hadn’t understood. He hadn’t made an effort to understand how she lived. Judging by Cho Min-sun’s reaction, this wasn’t a special incident. She found it normal to be insulted in front of people she knew.

And she endured it. Because she was a mistress’s child. It was the reason why she just endured it most of the time. Perhaps her clumsy nature and difficulty expressing emotions was the result of this patience.

When he thought about it, he was barely able to withstand the rage.

“I’m sorry. Let’s go somewhere else.”

Cho Min-sun said as she returned to her seat. After seeing her still wet dress, something broke in his head.

“No. I told you. Someone I know booked this restaurant in advance. An opportunity to eat expensive food on someone else’s money is rare. So we should stay here and eat the food.”

“Sheesh, that bitch is still here. She truly has a thick skin. That bitch! Her thick skin must be hereditary. How else would a woman seduce a married

man?”

The woman, Cho Mi-ra murmured in an unpleasant voice. Then the man cutting his steak laughed and said.

“Hey, don’t do that. Pitiful.”

“What is pitiful? That man over there is the pitiful one. Just thinking of that bitch makes me feel sick to my stomach.”

“Isn’t she quite pretty?”

“What?”

“Why are you so sensitive?”

“I’m sensitive? Didn’t I tell you? I feel sick just thinking of that bitch. Yet she dares have a meal in a restaurant like this! Damn, how can I enjoy my meal when she’s here? My status is falling just being in the same restaurant as her.”

“Be tolerant.”

The man laughed.

“You will understand if you look closely. Your sibling.....I understand. Look at the man she brought. His clothes have that vintage look. Don’t you think it is like something from a drama? The poor man and the mistress’s daughter despised by her family. They will drink vending machine coffee and mutually comfort each other. While doing that, they forced themselves to come to a restaurant like this once. This will be the first and last time they can eat such fine pasta in their lives. So don’t they have to give up on alcohol? Ah, damn. I feel like crying after seeing them eat pasta in such clothes.”

“Hohoho! It is like you said! Pitiful!”

“Yes, it is rare for people like us to meet such poor people. So sometimes we need to do something. Noblesse oblige! Have you heard of it? People who are people with a status like us needs to help the poor. Hey!”

The man then beckoned a waiter over.

“What wines are good here?”

“Several fine wines just came in today.”

“The price range?”

“The cheapest is 800,000 won.....”

“I understand. That is suitable.”

The man interrupted the waiter’s words and pointed to Hyun-woo’s table.

“Take it to that table. Did you see before? My girlfriend mistook that woman over there. Please tell them I’ve sent this as an apology. But.....obtain consent from that gentleman first. That gentleman might be offended but he also has pride. He needs to calculate it himself. Whether to accept my sincerity or not.”

“I will tell him.”

Once the waiter left, the man smiled and said.

“How about it? Letting the poor drink wine they could never taste in their life is noblesse oblige.”

“Kalkalkalkal! This is great. Noblesse oblige!”

Cho Mi-ra watched Hyun-woo and Cho Min-sun with interested eyes. Once the waiter approached and explained the wine, Hyun-woo quickly looked over at their table. After a while, he bowed and accepted the wine.

A laugh emerged from Cho Mi-ra’s mouth.

“He took it.”

“He is a beggar. His pride won’t let him turn down a 800,000 won wine. It is pitiful drinking a 800,000 won wine with pasta. Should I throw a steak there as another good deed?”

“Try it! Try it! Let’s see if they receive it this time!”

“Okay. Hey, over here....eh?”

The man jumped up as he was about to call the waiter.

“What is it?”

“Ah, no. Wait a minute.”

The man hastily ran across the room. He was heading towards a group of men entering the restaurant. It was an old man in his 50s surrounded by 10 Arab foreigners. The man approached the old gentleman and asked.

“Hello, Chairman Kim?”

“Huh? You are?”

“I am the youngest son of Central Hotel. I met you last time at my father’s birthday celebration.”

“Yes, I remember. Your name was Park Eun-chan?”

“Thank you for remembering. By the way, these people with you.....”

“Ah, do you know them?”

Of course he knew.

The man Park Eun-chan called Chairman Kim was the president of the large Seongyeon Corporation. And one of the Arab men was the world famous middle eastern oil tycoon, Abdul.

Even a global entrepreneur would require a few months booking in order to meet him. That’s why Park Eun-chan came running over.

Park Eun-chan was his father’s youngest son so he was ambitious.

Connections was the most important thing to Park Eun-chan. If he managed to build a relationship with the Chairman of the Seongyeon Corporation and the oil tycoon Abdul then he could achieve his ambitions.

“It is an honour to meet Chairman Kim and the world famous Abdul-nim. I never heard that Chairman Kim and Abdul-nim were friendly. Do you mind if I serve you personally?”

“Thank you but that isn’t needed.”

Chairman Kim smiled and shook his head.

“Abdul and I came here to meet a friend after a long time.”

“A friend? Someone in this restaurant?”

Park Eun-chan looked around with confused eyes. A corporation’s chairman and an oil tycoon was meeting someone directly? Wouldn’t that person be a VIP if they were called a friend? A politician? Business tycoon?

Park Eun-chan looked around as his imagination spread.

“Oh! There.”

Then Chairman Kim smiled widely and raised his arm. And they walked to a table in the corner like they had no interest in Park Eun-chan. The next moment, Park Eun-chan’s mouth dropped open as he saw where Abdul and Chairman Kim stopped.

“Hahahat! Hyun-woo, have you been well?”

‘What, what the? The person Chairman Kim and Abdul called a friend.....’

He was the coffee vending machine man that he called pitiful.

While the VIPs greeted Hyun-woo happily, their attendants moved around the table like a folding screen! Then the guests who noticed Chairman Kim and Abdul started buzzing.

“Chairman of the Seongyeon group? And isn’t that Arab man Abdul?”

“Why are such people here?”

“Who are they sitting with?”

“I don’t know who they are but it is no joke. They must not be ordinary to be sitting with two people like that.”

Park Eun-chan returned to his table.

“M-Mira! Talk properly! That man with your sibling, who is he?”

“Who? How should I know?”

“You really don’t know?”

“I don’t know. Rather, who are those people?”

“Damn, you don’t even know those people? If you’re the daughter of a chairman then you should show some interest in the business community. That person is the Chairman of the Seongyeon Corporation. And that Arab man is Abdul, an oil tycoon!”

Cho Mi-ra’s eyes widened at Park Eun-chan’s explanation.

“Eh eh? Why are those people sitting with a guy like him?”

“Damn! How should I know? He must be huge if Chairman Kim and Abdul are intentionally meeting him. Dammit! What did I do.....?”

“Excuse me.”

While Park Eun-chan was sweating. The waiter from before came up with a bottle of wine and said.

“The guest sent a wine as repayment for the one you sent a short while ago. This is a 78 year old French wine with a market price of 2.25 million won. The guest told us to send our most expensive wine over here. And he said to tell you this. It would be a burden to accept an expensive win on the first meeting without anything in return.”

“H-how dare he!”

“Sit down!”

Park Eun-chan shouted towards Cho Mi-ra. And he replied with a bitter

expression.

“.....Tell him that I appreciate the drink.”

“Are you crazy? Do you know what this means? Is your pride worth 2.25 million won?”

“Dammit! Yes, my pride is worth 2.25 million won. What will you do? Will you report me? Didn’t you hear my words? That guy is a person who is friends with Chairman Kim and Abdul! Should I go grab his collar after seeing the people around that table? We would be immediately thrown out if that happens!”

“Then you should eat alone!”

Cho Mi-ra jumped up and ran out of the restaurant. But Park Eun-chan didn’t follow. He had just mocked someone talking with some very important people. He was depressed and felt like he was sitting on a pincushion but there was something he was even more anxious about.

The man was only in his twenties so how could he be meeting with such people? He couldn’t get up before he figured it out.

Approximately 1 hour passed before they left their seats.

Hyun-woo and Cho Min-sun left the restaurant first while Park Eun-chan approached the Chairman’s secretary who was paying for the bill, including the wine!

“Chairman Kim-nim, I met that person just now so if you don’t mind, could you tell me who he is?”

“Ah, Director Kim Hyun-woo?”

“Director?”

“Yes, he isn’t a friend. More like.....shall I say a God?”

“What is going on?”

“What is going on? What?”

“Those people just now. Did Hyun-woo ssi really call them?”

“Yes, is that strange?”

“It is strange. That middle aged man is the Chairman of the Seongyeon Corporation. And the Arab person is an oil tycoon. The fact that those two reserved a restaurant table for you is remarkable but for them to come when Hyun-woo called?”

“That means your boyfriend is a wonderful person.”

Hyun-woo stopped and looked at Cho Min-sun. And he said with a smile.

“Mainly in the game.”

The Seongyeon Chairman and Arab oil tycoon. They had a secret hobby that most people didn’t know about. That hobby was the virtual reality game, New World. This was a secret the world didn’t know about but this hobby was the reason why Chairman Kim had a close friendship with Abdul.

While meeting for a business transaction, Chairman Kim noticed Abdul talking about New World with the interpreter. Thanks to that, Chairman Kim and Abdul noticed that they shared the same hobby! They caught monsters together and became close friends. And while going on eventful adventures, they came across a disaster.

After gathering information for a few months, they found a hidden labyrinth dungeon in the Ronwe Mountains! While exploring the dungeon, they fell into a trap and became trapped in the labyrinth. In addition, the resurrection place was inside the dungeon so they couldn’t escape by dying.

Thanks to that, they were trapped in a dungeon for a month.

Anyone who played the game would know. Being trapped somewhere was extremely painful. However, the problem wasn’t something that could be

solved with lots of money. Chairman Kim and Abdul pondered it before coming up with one last method.

They privately contacted the senior executives of Global Exos and asked to take out their characters. However there was no way even for the senior executives. Moving a user's location in the game required administrator privileges. And there was only one person in New World with that power, Hyun-woo who controlled the master code.

And after Hyun-woo was told the situation.....

‘A corporation chairman and oil tycoon? So what should I do? New World is a game that follows the rules of reality. They are mistaken if they think that money can buy them everything. That isn't possible as long as I'm the moderator of New World! I will refuse such solicitation! If you're a user then you should solve the problem like a user!’

He dismissed them for that reason!

In fact, Hyun-woo had expected to be pressured at this point. Chairman Kim and Abdul had billions of dollars behind them. Yet a mere game director like Hyun-woo who had been a user not long ago had rejected their request. They wouldn't be able to hold still.

No, there was actually an uproar at Global Exos. It was to the extent that the President asked him to accept their request. Hyun-woo became even more stubborn the more they badgered him. Then an email arrived.

-We're sorry to ask something so unreasonable.

We will respect the judgement of New World's moderator.

Let's pretend this didn't happen.....

Hyun-woo became curious about these two people. So he used his Genie Lamp and flew to the labyrinth to meet the two of them. Then Hyun-woo started to realize that he had misunderstood Chairman Kim and Abdul.

Hyun-woo thought they were users who spent their money on equipment and wandered around bullying other people. However, he met Chairman Kim and Abdul and realized the equipment they wore had been obtained through pure grinding.

Hyun-woo had no intention of withdrawing his words. They weren't trapped due to a bug. And he couldn't just use the power of the master code to solve a user's problem. Chairman Kim and Abdul had also sent a reply stating that they respected his intentions.

‘But if I help them as a user.....’

Thus Hyun-woo teamed up with them and helped clear the dungeon. Of course, he didn't use any equipment obtained with the power of the master code. Naturally the adventures of the three of them was difficult.

However, as the leader Hyun-woo breached numerous traps and gradually repelled the swarm of monster attacks as they advanced through the dungeon! He had led Chairman Kim and Abdul out of the dungeon in a week. And a friendship that transcended age and status sprouted between them.

Of course, this was still just a game. Chairman Kim and Abdul had a completely different status from Hyun-woo. Hyun-woo had no intention of showing off their friendship in reality. Yet Chairman Kim and Abdul's appearance meant they also regarded Hyun-woo as a friend in reality.

This was the reason those two booked a reservation for Hyun-woo. This material compensation could already be considered friendship. And they gladly gave Hyun-woo their phone number regardless of status. They became friends after a week-long adventure.

‘As a result, these two people consented to be used.....’

“I really don't know Hyun-woo ssi.”

Cho Min-sun murmured after hearing his explanation.

“Are you disappointed?”

“Is there something to be disappointed about?”

“Of course not.”

“Then I’m not. Rather, I’m more shocked by the price of the food.”

“Then what about the 2nd thing? Chairman Kim paid for the food as well as the wine sent to your sister. Say whatever you please.”

“Let’s go grab some ramyun and kimbap.”

Cho Min-sun replied as she grabbed Hyun-woo’s arm.

‘.....Chairman Kim and Abdul will understand.’

Hyun-woo laughed and nodded.

“Yes, let’s go!”

‘Now.....’

Ark stood up and shouted.

“Report the condition of the ether.”

“The engine is in a good state! No abnormalities in the control system! Balance system is okay! Energy charging has been 100% completed! We can take off whenever you command!”

The person in the cockpit was the hamster Tori! The storage container that arrived after defeating the Kraken was Tori.

Shortly after the Silver Star landed on E-2036, Ark heard from Hegel that fuel rods were necessary so he had instantly sent a communication to S-20.

Send fuel rods and Tori as quickly as possible to E-2036. The damage to the Silver Star was serious enough that a profession engineer was required to repair it. However there was one small problem.

Some people might've forgotten but Tori still had a prisoner status. Of course, Tori could move freely thanks to Marquis Martin. But his prisoner status meant it would be difficult for him to take a ship. In addition, Ark was currently hiding his location from Hawk. Hawk could easily obtain the information that Ark was Tori's guardian and keep an eye on him.

So Asuran devised using a cargo container. The courier had accepted Marquis Martin's cargo certificate and it was delivered. This was the noise that terrorized the sailors on the Pelican.

Tori had a lot of experience so he knew. There was a tremendous difference between the cabins and cargo compartment on a ship. There was no consideration for passengers in the cargo compartment so there was minus degree temperature. Of course, he was wearing a life support device but that was literally to sustain life.

"D-delivery.....scary.....so scary....."

When he opened the container, Tori was blue and trembling and kept on repeating those words. After the frozen hamster was thawed, Ark immediately rushed him to repair the Silver Star. The gun turrets still weren't repaired but the engine and control system had been fixed.

Naturally the energy charge was also complete! The Silver Star had lost a considerable amount of fuel thanks to the Kraken. However, the energy storage he obtained meant he could charge it to 100%. The Silver Star's eight ether fuel tanks also became full. This was sufficient to last 1 year without a separate energy replenishment.

Once again, the Kraken.....it was worth a huge amount of money. Anyway, it had been 4 days since they've landed on the E-2036.

"It is a little late but....."

Ark grinned as he looked at the information window.

Character Information Window			
Name	Ark (R-02788)	Level	133
Species	Human	Occupation	Elim's Heir
Fame	11,730	Adventure	1,590
Health	3,300 (+325)	Mental Power	450 (+340)
Mana	0	Force	1,825
Strength	320 (+35)	Agility	375 (+51)
Stamina	545 (+65)	Wisdom	40 (+13)
Intelligence	320 (+68)	Luck	55 (+8)
* Title Cleaning Foreman (Agility + 3) Ignorant Destroyer (Wisdom -10, Strength +7, Stamina +7) Beltana's Hero (Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Intelligence, Luck +3) Athamas' Hero (Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Intelligence, Luck +5) Mediator (Wisdom, Intelligence +15)			
* Contribution: Galactic Federation 19,520, Aschulat 500			

* Affiliation: Dark Eden (CEO)

*Body Coating: Survivor

- + Environmental adaptation increases by 50% due to the Survivor coating.
- + The Survivor coating reduces the drop rate of Satiety by 30%.
- + The Survivor coating will reduce fall damage by 50%.
- +The 'Clairvoyance' effect of the Survivor coating is applied.

Ark wouldn't just fall down obediently! There was some meaning to the time spend on E-2036. He had gained 3 levels on Impeltus and 10 on E-2036! That was 13 levels gained since leaving Turan.

That wasn't all.

“Hyung-nim, the analysis is over!”

Hegel handed him the Unknown Scale Pants obtained from the Kraken. While Tori was repairing the Silver Star, Hegel had also finished the item analysis.

-Belphegor's Scaly Pants (Unique)

Item Type: Light Armour (Pants) Wearer Restriction: Level 100

Defense: 80 Durability: 8080

In the early days of space pioneering, pants using the legendary Belphegor was created.

A number of incredible anecdotes about the Belphegor have been handed

down among pioneers. One of them was that the Belphegor could fight back against enemies even when sleeping. According to an anecdote, it defeated pirates for three days and three nights while sleeping and the pirates fled rather than face it when the Belphegor woke up.

That was why the Belphegor was called a space dragon and armour made out of its leather. This armour has a strong defense tough to imitate with modern science and there is a probability of a mysterious power exploding when attacks hit the scales.

<Stamina +30, Agility +20>

* Special Options (King's Wrath): When the armour is attacked, there is a 5% chance of the scales jumping out and causing a vortex around the enemy, inflicting 15~20 damage.

The unique armour Belphegor's Scaly Pants! Once again, Ark had gobbled up most of the spoils from the Kraken. Ark had prevented the Kraken from destroying the Silver Star alone.

In the meantime, the team members had been trapped in the collapsed hole and were out in space for more than 1 hour because Ark was distracted trying to stop the energy from leaking from the hole. He finally remembered about them and brought them back with Hegel and Milan. So none of them dared say anything about the Kraken's loot to Ark.

But Ark was generous.

"Aren't we colleagues who teamed up together?"

.....He said and distributed half of the loot to the team. Of course the unique Belphegor's Scaly Pants, the Kraken's cell tissue and the rare Destruction Hammer was in Ark's backpack. He handed out the 3 general items to the team.

The cell tissue was only worthy for Ark who had a researcher and Berad was

the only team member who used a hammer so the others didn't complain. They couldn't ignore the enormous monetary loss Ark suffered from the damage to the Silver Star. That's why Ark was currently wearing the Belphegor's Scaly Pants!

That wasn't the only harvest from E-2036. It took Tori one day to repair the Silver Star. While he was enjoying a date with Irina, the team members used that time to search the underground space. As a result, they obtained a harvest he hadn't considered.

‘But.....’

Now wasn't the time. According to Irina, Hawk had obtained an important clue and was already moving.

‘If I delay any longer then I might be a step too late. Hawk will end up eating all the quest rewards. Anyway, we've found everything possible from E-2036 so it is time to return to the first team. I need to stop by Turan to pick up Melina, Park, Berad and Cupa so there is no time for further delay!’

“Milan, operate the engine! The destination is Turan!”

“Yes, Hyung-nim! Silver Star start!”

Kuaaaah!

The Silver Star emitted flames and soared off! It was an emergency that lasted 4 days.

The Sleeping Enemy

Planet Maseti.

It was a large planet with more than 100 ships as traffic in a day. It was natural for a place where pioneers gathered to develop. The lights from the port were never turned off.

Kukwang! Kukwang! Kukwang!

Loud music was heard from a tavern. Three people were sitting around a table covered by cigarette smoke.

One person was a hamster from the Tiny Clan with eyes that agilely moved from left to right, there was another alien species wearing a wolf shaped pendant from the Wolf Clan and the last person with a thuggish appearance was from the Belkin Clan.

The three species chewed on their cigarette and looked at the pile of coins on the table with sharp eyes. After a few moments of tense silence, the Belkin clan member threw a card and shouted.

“Triple aces!”

The hamster and wolf simultaneously made faces like they were chewing on poo.

“Hahahaha! You’re expressions are perfect! I’m sorry but this is.....”

“Uhuh! Why are you in such a hurry? You should check the others before celebrating first.”

Then the hamster grinned and set down his cards. The cards that fell on the table was a Q, Q, Q, Q!

“Q-queen four of a kind?”

“Kit! Doesn’t 4 beat 3?”

“Aigoo, tsk tsk tsk. Sorry, what should I do?”

Then the Wolf Clan who had been sitting silently clicked his tongue and murmured. And he showed yellow teeth as he turned over his cards one by one.

“K....K.....K.....K.....heok! N-no way! King four of a kind?”

“It will sweep the pot over the queen. Shouldn’t a man be economical? In that sense.....”

The Wolf clan member swiped all the gold and silver with his scarred arms. The Belkin clan member who had been blankly watching the scene grasped the Wolf’s arm.

“Wait a minute! It’s a scam! ”

“A scam? This person dares say something like that?”

“Indeed! Is it common sense that three aces, four queen and four kings emerge in the same hand? Something is definitely strange. Hey, rat! Check the remaining cards!”

“Hey, that’s not very polite. And are you a child? I am the age of your father.”

“Shut up!”

The Belkin clan pulled out a pistol and stuck it to the temple of the Wolf clan.

“Uh, I really can’t coexist with a someone from your species. You lost money and now you want to do this? Hey rat, if you want to stay alive then don’t move a finger. Yes, if you turn over the cards and I didn’t cheat then who will take responsibility for the situation?”

“I will give my throat and all of my remaining money!”

“Ha! Today is a good day.”

The Wolf clan said with a laugh. Suddenly a man approached behind the

Wolf Clan.

“Are you Captain Esut of the interstellar ship Marsyosia?”

“Who are you? Am I the a neighbourhood dog? What do you want with me?”

“I’ve come with a job request.”

“Job? Can’t you see the situation right now? You want to hire me in a situation like this? And I’ve already signed an exclusive contract with another person.”

“I know. An associate told me so. The Marsyosia has an exclusive contract and won’t be taking requests for several months. And you depart periodically twice a week but there are no records of any cargo being transported. At least officially.”

The corners of the Wolf clan’s eyes started to flinch.

“Who are you?”

“A person interested in your goods.”

“What are you doing? I don’t want to see you right now! If you don’t disappear immediately.....”

The Belkin clan shouted angrily and fired his pistol towards the man.

Cheolkeok! Cheolkeok! Cheolkeok! Cheolkeok!

There was a sound coming from all directions! It was the sound of 10 people around a table lifting their machine guns. The Tiny clan and Belkin clan involved in the poker game looked confused.

“Do I need to bother explaining? You have to go with me.”

“That isn’t possible.”

Esut stepped back with a grin. At that time, something fell from the arm the man was grabbing? They were cards that fell! The unknown man and Belkin clan shouted at the same time.

“P-prosthetic arm?”

“It was a damn scam! There are hidden cards in the prosthetic arm!”

“Kekekeke! You stupid guys!”

Pepeng!

The prosthetic then exploded. At the same time, a tremendous flash emanated in all directions! The Belkin clan and the people holding machine guns hurriedly hid their eyes from the flash.

“Kekeke! Fools! Do you think the great Esut will be caught by guys like you?”

Esut turned over the table and ran. The money on the table fell and scattered all over the place. The people watching from a distance started swarming like vultures.

“M-money!”

“The first person who picks it up will be the owner!”

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

There were continuous bursts of sound. White smoke soared and instantly enveloped the place. The unknown man still didn't have his sight restored from the prosthetic flash and shouted angrily.

“Smoke bombs! That Esut! Seal the exits!”

“D-dammit! Don't touch it! That is my money! Ya, what are you doing? I'll kill the scum that dares touch my money! No, Esut! I'll kill Esut!”

The Belkin's yell followed afterwards. Then the Belkin clan members scattered around the tavern drew their weapons in unison. The man burst out with confusion.

“T-this! They were subordinates? No! I must capture Esut! Stop the Belkin clan!”

“Kill everyone that dares interfere! Shoot! Kill everything!”

“Damn! Fire!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

It was difficult to distinguish anything in the thick smoke. People were flocking like vultures over the gold and silver scattered on the floor! The peaceful tavern turned noisy. On the roof of the tavern.

“Kekekeke. It isn’t easy being me.”

The white wolf Esut smiled as he gazed through the window.

“That dumb Belkin gave me an opportunity. By the way, who was that man just now? Are those guys related to my transport work? Sheesh, I travel around a lot these days so I can’t believe they know how to find me. I have a headache. I have to sneak out of Maseti.”

Esut jumped from roof to roof. After crossing a few roofs, he jumped down directly in front of a bike parked in the alley.

“Now, shall I go?”

He had stashed a bike in case of situations like this. Esut smiled and was about to connect his Nymphé to the bike.

“You’re better off stopping.”

A threatening voice was heard in the darkness. When he flinched and turned around, a man walked into the alley. It wasn’t the man he met in the tavern. The man was wearing black armour, had dark hair and an eyepatch covering one eye.

“W-who are you?”

“Do I need to explain it?”

“You don’t need to! Just go to hell!”

Esut’s bag opened at that moment.

3 grenades flew towards the man. It was then that the man moved. In the next moment, the man flew towards Esut like a bullet while grabbing the two swords at his waist.

The moment his hands touched the hilt, his body rotated and drew a line towards the flying grenades.

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

Then three shots rang out and the grenades exploded. The man stopped rotating and instantly moved 10 metres. And two bullets flew towards his direction. Menace shone in the eyes of the man with dark hair.

A man emerged wearing a black helmet.

“.....Who?”

The Black Helmet didn't answer. He just put his pistol back in its place at his waist.

After that, another man walked out. However this time his identity didn't need to be questioned. There was no need to. The man coming with a gleeful smile.....

“Eh? A-Ark-nim?”

At a large dock shaped like a square.

“Wow! Is it really Ark-nim? Ark-nim!”

Over 10 team units were gathered at the dock when Ark entered. The man wearing armour that looked like overalls and had a moustache was Mario. Mario ran towards Ark like he was a mushroom.

“What is going on?”

“What's going on? What?”

“What? Doesn't Ark-nim know yet? All units who left on this mission were

ambushed. I received an attack by people wearing black helmets and some units had the Rama show up. 9 ships were sunk from those attacks.”

“I already know. I was also ambushed.”

“But you managed to come back alive.”

To be honest, Ark was the one who wanted to say that.

In fact, the first person he thought would fall was Mario. Mario’s occupation was a merchant and when he checked on Turan, he was leading at least 30 subordinates that were more than level 100. However, having the party leader being a merchant was a significant penalty.

Galaxian was set up so that any occupation could build an Agent. An agent could focus on warrior specialties or commerce depending on the employed staff and merchants also hired mercenaries. The problem was that the user’s occupation had a significant impact on the hired subordinates.

Warriors attracted stronger warriors. This was also true for a NPC’s inclination. Some NPC mercenaries would only be hired by users they respected. A warrior could easily lead a company of NPC mercenaries in battle while it would be a lot harder for merchants.

And vice versa. Merchants would find it easy to lead a group of NPC merchants but a warrior would find it more difficult.

But there was even more. Agent skills existed inside Galaxian. Currently Ark was using the ‘Joint Business-I’ Agent skill. In Ark’s case, all his employees except Kurakan were NPCs so he select ‘Joint Business-I.’ However, the Agent skill that most users selected first was ‘Qualities of a Leader-I.’

If the leader was a warrior then ‘Qualities of a Leader’ would give a bonus to the employees’ combat power. This Agent skill was why those with a warrior in charge were more profitable in battle.

If the skill level was high and reached the 4th stage, there would be at least a

30% difference in combat ability when the Agent's CEO was a warrior compared to a merchant.

This was why the user's occupation was important! As a result, a merchant would take a significant penalty in battle even with a lot of soldiers.

Nevertheless, Mario was still alive with 50% of his subordinates.

'A merchant must have that type of skill if they joined the investigation team. Did he deliberately make his character similar to Mario in order to make the opponent underestimate him? Indeed, I was also careless because of his name and looks. When thinking about it, I can't be careless around a guy who thought this deeply when making his character. Indeed, the other team units are the same as well.'

Ark looked around the dock with interested eyes. Including Mario, there were 11 units on this dock. These units were able to survive an ambush from an unidentified foe. That in itself proved their skills.

"I was worried when Ark-nim didn't return to Turan."

"I was lucky."

"By the way, how did you know to come here?"

"That...."

Ark turned his head and took a sneak peek at a woman. Her name was Irina, she belonged to the 1st investigation team and was Ark's 'girl.'

While Ark was repairing the Silver Star on E-2036, Hawk analysed the information from the 11 units that returned safely and was able to find some clues.

Among them was information about a transportation line carrying a rare mineral. The name of that transport like was Marsyosia. Therefore Hawk dispatched his subordinates to investigate Marsyosia. And they determined that they weren't unloading the minerals on a Hive or planet.

‘The possibility that Marsyosia is supplying the minerals to organization X is extremely high!’

The conclusion came naturally. Hawk rallied the team members and followed the location of the Marsyosia. It was possible to find Captain Esut on Maseti.

Obviously Ark had heard this from Irina, not Hawk. After Irina joined up with the secondary task force, she had used real time cell phone communication to identify their movements. And while Hawk had deliberately surrounded the tavern to find the hiding Esut, Ark had gone to where he was.

That’s right. Hawk was the man waiting for Esut in the alley. And Ark was the one who subsequently appeared.

‘But.....’

There was no reason to give such information to Mario. Hawk was now the general manager so he couldn’t 100% trust any units. In this situation Irina was the only 100% reliable one so Ark and Irina needed to keep their relationship hidden. This was the reason why Ark pretended not to know Irina.

“Of course I ran after the smell of the members.” My sense of smell is that developed.”

“Hrmm.....”

Mario looked at Ark with disbelieving eyes. But he judged that it was useless to ask so he nodded and said.

“Anyway, it is lucky. In fact, I was a little anxious. 6 of the 9 units killed in the ambush belonged to the military section. 10 vs. 10 changed to 4 vs. 7. Now it is 5 vs. 7 thanks to Ark-nim’s return. Well, there are still fewer military faction members but it is better than before.”

Ark looked around silently at the end of Mario’s words. Currently the

members were gathered around Hawk's ship, the Death Knight. The members gathered here were still divided into the military and political factions of Tatuine. Apart from Mario, there were only 3 people from the military faction.

One of them was the 18th ranked Ferguson, Kaien the CEO of the mercenary Agent and Ryu who was the CEO of Arion. If Ark and Mario were added then it would equal 5 people. The military faction had been literally halved.

On the other hand, there were still 7 people from the political faction.

‘As expected, Valencia failed to come back.’

Valencia had been killed by Ark at the secret laboratory. And his spaceship had been smashed by the subsequent appearance of the Red Slaughterer. Even if Valencia had returned to the investigation team, he would still be expelled. For Ark it was like a sick teeth falling out.....

“The problem is Hawk.”

Mario scratched his head and said.

“Did you hear? Hawk expelled all units that were defeated by the unidentified enemy. Members who were killed revived at Turan but Hawk ruthlessly said that they don't have the right to be part of the team. Ark-nim had the unresolved status of a missing person but you couldn't return in time so he said you were still expelled. Of course, our military faction prefers that Ark-nim remain but.....”

Irina was also concerned about this part. But Ark wasn't worried about it. No, there was no need to worry.

“.....Ark!”

Splinters of the grenade fell in the dark alley. Hawk looked in the direction the bullets flew from and confusion spread on his face.

Ark had showed up near the 3 grenades that exploded. They lost contact after the mission to Impeltus so he had assumed that the Silver Star had disintegrated. However, he never imagined that Ark would show up on Maseti.

But Hawk didn't ask the corny questions like Mario. Ark who he lost contact with was now in Maseti. This meant Ark hadn't lost the Silver Star under Valencia and the Red Slaughterer's attacks and someone else in the team had told Ark about Hawk's search for Esut.

He was curious about who gave Ark the information but Ark would answer even if he asked. So Hawk only asked one question.

"Why did you come here?"

"Isn't it to join up with the investigation team again?"

"Didn't you hear? You aren't a member anymore."

"Why?"

"I said it when issuing the mission. I will only admit members who could properly handle the duties entrusted to them. And you didn't come back in time. Do I need to explain anymore?"

"But you didn't tell us the most important thing."

Then Ark pulled out a small object from his pocket. A USB. It was the USB Hawk gave to the members that contained information about their mission.

"This USB has a GPS transmitting device attached."

Hawk's one eye distorted slightly after Ark's words. But it was only for a moment. Then Hawk's mouth grinned as he looked at the USB.

"So what? Yes, the USB has a GPS transmitting device on it. It is inserted into the device. However I am the team leader. Can't the leader have a GPS device to track the movement of the team members?"

“I thought like that as well.”

“So?”

“I’ll tell the members that the team leader leaked their location to the unidentified enemy.”

“What makes you say that?”

“I got the information directly from someone.”

“It’s me.”

Then the gunner wearing the black helmet came forward. There was a crack in Hawk’s mask of tranquillity.

Hawk had leaked the GPS information to make the factions strike against each other. In fact, Hawk didn’t care about what faction had more members surviving. He created a virtual enemy in order to plant an awareness of danger into the members. Now that the balance between the military and political factions was upset then Hawk was perfectly in control.

However one person was an exception.

Ark!

‘There are no other users that stand out among the remaining units. But Ark is with the military faction. So far he isn’t more powerful than the other members but ‘he’ is Ark. The scariest thing is that he is unpredictable. It could be seen as a fluke but when it is repeated many times, it is obviously skill. More users in New World were defeated by Ark because they underestimated him. But I won’t make the same mistake. If there is a chance then I will use every method to handle this guy.’

He didn’t mind if other team members survived. However he had wanted to handle Ark before the formal mission started. That’s why Hawk had to intervene directly in the attack on Ark. He wanted to handle Ark so he had explained the situation ahead of time to Valencia. It was so sufficient troops

to handle Ark would be prepared.

That's how Valencia was able to mobilize over 100 troops in the secret laboratory. Before leaving Tatuine, Hawk had visited Marquis Jyubel and Valencia who were in a meeting room. He promised to secretly pass on information about Ark after the mission started.

Marquis Jyubel and Valencia weren't the only people in the room. The user Hawk believed was 100% on Marquis Jyubel's side like Valencia was.....

"Are you Rapid?"

"That's correct."

"Aren't you Marquis Jyubel's person?"

"I was at the time. But there were some circumstances. Do you want to hear it?"

"No."

Hawk spat out. His eyes turned to Ark and his lips twisted.

"Well, this is the reason you are so confident? Yes, okay. I admit it. I gave your GPS information to Valencia. What about it? Are you here to get revenge?"

"That's a good idea."

Ark laughed and grabbed the lightsaber at his waist. At the same time, Hawk flinched and raised his pair of swords. In the next moment, Ark just scratched his head and said.

"No, stop that. It clear but the evidence was still circumstantial. You secretly hid the GPS device in the USB and gave information to Valencia but that isn't evident that you instigated the ambush. I would just be a criminal if I killed you in such a situation."

"You talk as if you would be able to win."

“Ah! Yes, that is also a problem. You are the coolest guy. You’re not like Valencia. You’re not someone who would run in blindly even if you dislike the person. You would clearly win if we decided to fight. And I also don’t want the investigation team to collapse. So I decided to remove the chance for revenge and just want to join the investigation team.”

“Aren’t you talking really informally to me?”

“Then you don’t understand my words?”

“That isn’t it.”

Hawk narrowed his eyes and replied. He stared at Ark for a while before talking again.

“But what will you do if I don’t allow you to join the investigation team again?”

“Then something difficult would happen. I will show the GPS and witness. Of course, the evidence is slightly lacking. But the team members aren’t stupid. Furthermore, some of the units that came back alive are those that attacked other units based on the GPS information you gave them. They’ve already caught on to a certain extent. If I tell them this information then their doubts will turn into certainty. How easy will it be to lead the team members then? How about it? Doesn’t it seem quite difficult?”

“It is difficult.”

Hawk nodded.

“But I’ve already expelled 9 units from the team. You survived the raid but you were late. Will the other units admit to you joining the team?”

“That’s a problem for you to worry about. You can easily take care of such difficulties.”

Ark grinned and replied.

“W-what are you bastards doing? Are you joking?”

Esut shouted as he looked between Ark and Hawk.

“I don’t know what you’re plotting but I am Esut! Dammit, this is the first time I’ve been ignored like this! Anyway, you have to die here!”

Esut took out a grenade again. It was a belt with 10 grenades hanging from it! But Hawk just sheathed his pair of swords.

“My battleship is at port 51. Take Esut there.”

And he muttered as he jumped up onto the roof.

“The details will come after that.”

“Ark-nim? Ark-nim!”

Mario shook Ark. Ark woke up from his memory and answered.

“Ah, yes. I’m sorry. I was thinking for a while.....”

“As expected, Ark-nim is also worrying about it.”

“Huh?”

“Don’t worry about it!”

Mario grabbed Ark’s hand.

“The largest reason Hawk gave for expelling the units was that they didn’t have their spaceships anymore. But Ark-nim didn’t lost your ship. Your situation is different from the others. So don’t worry too much. The members of the military faction will band together to stop Hawk from expelling Ark-nim.”

“Ah, yes.....”

Ark replied with an awkward smile.

“Attention!”

Soldiers suddenly shouted from the opposite side. The soldiers split to the left

and right as Hawk walked in the centre. He stood on a podium and gave a speech while looking at the team members.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. The time was more delayed then I expected so I’ll explain the next mission. Harley, spread the map.”

“Yes, Leader-nim.”

Harley pulled out a sphere.

It was set down on the ground and a light emerged. Then a member of the political faction came forward.

“Before that happens, I would like an explanation.”

“What is it?”

“Ark who is among the members. Right now there are 11 units here. 9 of them were expelled after the first mission. I was surprised when you first stated it and thought it was an over-reaction but I was convinced by your words. But now is it fair to accept a member who was expelled from the team? I would like to hear Captain-nim’s explanation. Is Ark really returning to the team?”

“If he returns?”

“I won’t accept it. In the worst case.....”

“Wait a minute! I’ll explain! Ark-nim clearly didn’t return to Turan on time. But he didn’t lose his ship unlike the other members. That.....”

Mario tried to come to Ark’s defense. Hawk shouted with a displeased expression.

“Shut up. Useless person!”

Mario retreated. However Hawk was staring at the member of the political faction.

“Like you said, Ark is an expelled member of the team. He was thrown away.

But he continued his mission when left alone and found a few clues that led him to Marseti. And he captured our target Esut.”

“E-Esut?”

“Yes, Esut who you stupidly missed.”

Hawk narrowed his eyes at the political faction member.

He was the man who approached Esut in the tavern and was caught in a shootout with the Belkin clan. His name....it was annoying to remember so let's just call him Member A for the moment. Anyway, Hawk continued in a sharp voice.

“The process isn't important. The important thing is the result. And results means the person has skill. That was why I expelled those nine units. It doesn't matter if they lost their lives or their spaceship. I expelled them because they didn't have the ability to protect their ship. Now, I ask you. I gave each of you a location to wait in order to capture Esut. But you deviated from my plan and approached Esut. It was good up to here. Like I said, the priority is getting results. However you missed Esut who was right in front of you. Esut was captured by Ark who was alone. Doesn't that mean he has more skill than you?”

“T-that....”

The political faction member's face turned red with shame. This was the reason Hawk handed Esut to Ark and left the alley. Ark had the USB with the GPS device and Rapid so Hawk was forced to accept Ark's offer. However, it was natural that the political faction wouldn't admit his return.

He used Esut as justification to allow Ark's return.

‘He really is scary.’

Ark thought as he gazed at Hawk. He heard from Irina about Hawk's plan to capture Esut at a tavern and the location he placed each member. Hawk who

was the leader was placed at the furthest point from the tavern. The other members though Hawk did this to concede to the members but.....

‘He is the guy who made the faction fight each other to seize control of the team. He wouldn’t just concede to the members. Hawk knew. Esut isn’t someone that will be easily caught. He knew that Esut would escape from the tavern. And Hawk would capture Esut when he ran.’

Ark knew it as well. He should capture Esut as justification to join the team. That’s why he went to Hawk’s location.

The result was a bingo.

Hawk was right where Esut stashed his ride. Hawk had monopolized the information he got in advance and planned to capture Esut. However he was forced to pass on the achievement to Ark.

-Dark Omen (Pioneer Quest) information has been updated.

<Dark Omen Sub Quest: Impeltus Investigation → Catch the Main Suspect> has been completed.

While the 2nd investigation team was investigating the planets containing rare minerals, they came across information that Esut from the Wolf Clan is likely supplying Organization X with the mineral. Esut was tracked to Maseti and a plan organized to capture him. You managed to catch Esut and prove your skills.

<Achievement: +1,800>

He confirmed this information before coming to the port.

If he had to explain, the members who revived after the first mission received 300~500 achievements. Hawk investigated 3 planets so he received 1,500 achievements.

Yet Ark had gained 1,800 in one go! The even more exciting thing was that

this achievement originally should've belonged to Hawk.

Hawk was forced to give up his achievement to give Ark a plausible reason to re-join the team. Of course it was impossible for him to feel good.

–It's starting now Ark! I'll make you regret this!

Ark could clearly read the message in Hawk's eyes. So Ark used the power of his eyes to return his own message.

–Yes! It is starting now Hawk! I'll make you regret taking me back.

A message also flashed in Irina's eyes who was looking at Ark.

–I've met you again in Galaxian. We're together!

Mario who was standing near also had a message.

The port was flooded with such message.

Anyway! Ark once again joined hands with the enemy.

Dark Star

“Sheesh!”

He was dissatisfied.

Ark and Irina were now in a relationship. And this was his first mission with Irina since then! He didn't want to hold hands while running through fields catching monsters but he imagined having a face to face conversation with her during the tedious voyage.

There was a communication function attached to his ship. But now he was accompanying the units. No, to be exact it was a problem because he was accompanying Hawk.

The expelled Ark was able to join up with the team on the planet Maseti due to the information Irina gave him. However Hawk was unaware of who gave him the information and if he learnt it was Irina then her position would become more difficult.

Therefore Ark and Irina decided to act like they didn't know each other and there was no communication between them.

‘Well, this is a secret shared between 2 people but.....’

He couldn't enjoy the situation when watching other units communicate. Thus he was in a gloomy mood. Then the door at the back of the bridge opened and Rapid entered.

“Have they connected? The other guys?”

“Not yet. After picking up Melina, Park, Berad and Cupa on Turan, the team drank until late on Maseti and haven't recovered yet. The cabin is really no joke.”

“Rapid hyung-nim, did you just wake up?”

Hegel lifted his hand and greeted Rapid. Hegel was the one who welcomed it the most when Rapid joined Dark Eden. That's because he gained quite an appreciation for Rapid during his stay on S-20.

Rapid was also kind to Hegel.

“Ah, yes. You must be having trouble under the vicious president.”

“Hey, who is a vicious president?”

“Then? Is a guy who sits behind his staff in the morning with a bitter expression a good president?”

“A good employee shouldn't just grunt when greeting the president in the morning.”

“I have no intention of being a good employee.”

“Is this something you should tell the president?”

“It is possible. Anyway, the only reason to look good for the president is to collect a bonus. Besides, the employees will be the ones suffering after the mission starts. I heard that Hawk treats his staff quite well so should I move there instead? Hey! Hegel, how about it? Do you want to go together?”

“Huh? No, I....”

“This bastard! Why are you trying to lure my staff to another job?”

“My words about leaving were just a joke....”

Rapid rubbed Hegel's smooth head. And he approached the seat next to Ark and asked.

“What relationship do you have with Hawk?”

“Relationship? What relationship?”

“What did you do to Hawk?”

“Why are you asking what I did? Didn't you see? I didn't do anything. I

didn't know him before entering the investigation team.”

“Then isn't it weird?”

Rapid frowned and continued talking.

“Didn't I tell you? Hawk met with us on Tatuine and offered to tell Valencia your location. If you've never met Hawk before then why did he use such a method to contain you?”

“I'm also curious. Why does he dislike me?”

“It isn't a problem that we can overlook. Hawk passing on information to Marquis Jyubel is dangerous. Hawk took a risk trying to take care of you. That behaviour can't be explained by Hawk simply disliking you. Obviously there is another reason. If you don't understand then you might receive some damage. That guy's presence is disruptive in itself.”

“His existence itself is disruptive? What type of bacteria is he? Whose side are you on?”

“Right now I'm on your side.”

Rapid laughed and replied.

“So I'm saying. There is no guarantee what will happen in the future. No, you threatened Hawk with the hidden GPS in the USB so there is no turning back. Hawk won't find it necessary to hide his thoughts anymore. And right now your status is at a disadvantage. Then shouldn't you at least know the reason why Hawk opposes you? If you know the cause then you can also find a solution.”

‘That makes sense but.....’

Ark was also tortured about this. No, Ark had been wondering about this since hearing that Hawk passed on his location to Valencia. However he couldn't come up with anything.

‘I've clearly never met him in Galaxian. Then was it New World?’

He had such thoughts. But there was no way to verify that. Ark in his current state wasn't the same Ark from New World. He had thoughts like Rapid but couldn't think of anything.

‘Who on earth are you?’

“Hyung-nim, we will be exited warp space soon!”

While Ark was thinking, Tori who was flying the Silver Star with Milan shouted.

At the same time, the swirling light outside the window formed a vortex. Ark lifted his head at the vibration when they exited.

“This seems to be the right place.”

“Yes, here.....”

Ark nodded at Rapid's words.

“Here.”

The Death Knight's port.

Hawk pointed to a spot on the galaxy map. Confusion spread on the faces of the unit members.

“There?”

“There is nothing at that place?”

It was no wonder that the unit members were ‘?’.

Hawk learnt from the captured transportation ship captain Esut where the rare minerals were being transported to. Esut unloaded the rare minerals in one place. The place was probably related to the Organization X that they were looking for.

That was the place Hawk was pointing to. However there was nothing there

on the galaxy map.

“Did he just give you any coordinates?”

“That is impossible.”

Hawk answered without thinking about it.

“My interrogation isn’t that insignificant. He isn’t able to lie to a pioneer like me.”

This situation.....

He didn’t want to imagine it.

“And I’m convinced this is the place.”

“Are you sure? There isn’t anything here?”

“This is what convinced me even more. As you know, the 3 powers don’t have any information about Organization X. Their reach in the galaxy is huge so it isn’t easy for an organization with antimatter to hide. I guessed this before receiving the mission. Those guys are hiding in an invisible place.”

“Invisible place? There are places like that in the space frontier?”

Hawk smiled at the question from one of the unit members.

“How many planets do you think this galaxy has? So far pioneers have only visited 10% of all the planets in this galaxy. No, the planetary existences that have been confirmed by the astronomers only reached 60%. That means there are 40% of planets that are still unknown. There are a number of reasons. The observation through telescopes makes it difficult to confirm planets overlapped with others or concealed by nebula gas. Such planets are called invisible or unknown planets.”

“But this place isn’t that far from a developed Hive. Can there be an unconfirmed planet in such a place?”

“And.....”

Hawk ignored the words and continued talking.

“There is a 0% chance that it is an unidentified planet. It is more likely to be an artificially hidden planet.”

“A-artificial? You mean someone deliberately hid the planet?”

“If the conditions are met then it isn’t that hard. This world is like that.”

Not a ship but an entire planet had been hidden. He couldn’t easily imagine it but it wasn’t impossible.

Science was relative. If observation techniques were developed then techniques to hide from observation could also be created. The 3 powers have developed scientific civilization over thousands of years but they were still using swords and firearms in battle.

Science and technology reaching a similar standard could also be called a weapon. And Galaxian was a game. Imagination could freely occur in such a world.

“How do you know there is an unidentified planet there?”

“It is simple. We go look for ourselves.”

Hawk replied with a grin.

<Dark Omen (Pioneer Quest)>

+ Sub Quest: Capture the Key Witness → Unidentified Planet

The investigation team has captured Esut, the captain of the transport ship Marsyosia who is suspected to be associated with Organization X. And after some questioning, Esut provided the coordinates of a specific place. However, a planet can’t be found at the coordinates Esut provided. Captain Hawk has decided to move directly to the coordinates to investigate. No one knows what will be at the coordinates. Therefore the danger is unknown.

Difficulty: ???

The information window that popped up! The next destination of the team was set. And.....

“.....Is that the unidentified planet?”

Ark looked out the window at the huge planet below him.

They had left Maseti and warped to the coordinates provided. However there was obviously a planet in front of the Silver Star. It was a planet slightly smaller than a moon. It was an unidentified planet like Hawk said.

Kwajijiji! Kwajijiji!

Then sparks blew from around the Silver Star. The sparks turned into 13 giant vortexes.

In the next moment, there was a ringing sound and 13 ships emerged. A variety of ships gathered around a huge, black battleship. They were Hawk's battleship the Death Knight, Irina's spaceship and those of the other team units.

“The official investigation team channel is connected.”

A large face floated on a screen at Hegel's words.

–We've come to the right place.

The man talking was Hawk. 15 hours had been spent on the warp voyage. Ark thought it was wonderful that there was a planet there but anger surged at Hawk's smug expression.

Fortunately he didn't need to watch the screen for a long time. The screen split and the other faces of the unit members and Irina appeared.

–Is there anything to report?

–Nothing.

–We’ve all arrived without any problems.

–Okay. We’re all rested from the warp voyage so we’ll embark on the next mission without any delay. As you can see, an unidentified planet is floating on our 12 o’clock. Esut delivered the rare minerals to this planet so it is likely to contain Organization X’s base. So prepare for emergency situations and enter orbit.

–Understood!

The unit members replied and started heading towards the greyish planet. A jet blue light emerged as 14 ships shot across the space. But 1 minute after starting their advance. Hegel shouted with an upset expression.

“Hyung-nim, there is an energy reaction!”

–A high mass energy reaction has been detected ahead of the fleet.

The voices of the members screaming overlapped with Hegel’s voice. And the next moment, the mouths of the members dropped simultaneously. When the fleet advanced towards the grey planet, a previously unseen huge object rose up.

It was a giant metal sphere dozens of kilometres in diameter. It was an artificial satellite covered in antennas and gun turrets.

–Stealth!

–A Hive of that size was hiding with stealth?

–That’s not a hive!

The person who raised his voice at the end was Hawk. Hawk muttered with a groan as he had a disbelieving expression on his face.

–That’s....Dark Star!

–D-Dark Star? That is a Dark Star?

–Dark Star.....the so called grim reaper of the universe.....

–Oh my god! Why is the Dark Star in a place like this?

The members' faces paled after hearing Hawk's words. Ark was also the same. He had heard of it before but this was the first time he saw a Dark Star on the battlefield!

The Dark Star orbited planets in the universe and was a satellite that intercepted any flying objects within a specific range. That's why aircrafts couldn't be used around planets with a Dark Star.

Once the Dark Star occupied an orbit around a planet, it would be difficult for even a fleet of battleships to destroy it. Therefore it was prohibited to launch spaceships or flying objects in the atmosphere of planets with a Dark Star.

It was literally the worst fortress with an arsenal of weapons! It was the most powerful weapon in the universe among the 3 powers. But now wasn't the time to be surprised.

–The energy density of the Dark Star is rising!

–It is preparing to fire!

–No way! It is firing from this distance? The Dark Star is thousands of kilometres from the fleet!

–No, it is possible if it is the Dark Star. Distance doesn't matter.....

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Huge streams of light emerged from the Dark Star. The streams of lights exploded over hundreds of kilometres towards the fleet. The team members hurriedly screamed.

–Holy shit! A charged energy particle cannon!

–It is coming!

–If we get distracted then we'll be destroyed! Mario, go in front and deploy a

wide area shield! Harley, move the Death Knight next to Mario's ship and make our anti-plasma shield overlap with his! Mario and I will stop the charged particle cannon. The remaining members will concentrate on countering the enemy's missiles with the GEM system!

The shields of two spaceships were overlapped. There were shields that generated a complete defense shield as well as wrap around the hull. A shield like that protected the battleships but also consumed a lot of energy so only a minimum of 4 star battleships had them equipped.

The only people who had them on this mission were Hawk and Mario. That's how Mario was able to return alive from the first mission.

-The wide field shield has been deployed!

As soon as Hawk and Mario shouted, two hexagonal shields flashed in front of the battleships.

-The turrets have changed to the GEM system!

While the shields were being deployed, the team members automatically changed to the GEM interceptor system. The GEM was an anti-missile interceptor that defended against the enemy's attacks. The 14 ships switched to defense and formed a wall of defense.

-Even if it is an attack from a Dark Star.....

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The team members' faces that had looked confident turned ashy at the ensuing explosion.

The light crossed the space in a blink of the eye and there were huge number of flashes as the light collided! There was a tremendous burst of light and Hawk and Mario's shield turned into dust. And more than half of the ships were damaged.

-Kuack! The armour around the ship's body has been 20% destroyed!

–We were hit as well!

The team members screamed as they were struck. The Silver Star behind Mario was no exception.

-You have received enemy fire!

<The durability of Silver Star's shield has decreased to 91%>

The light that just passed the shield decreased its durability to 91%. Most of the 12 ships in the back also intercepted the missiles with the GEM system. With the current state of the shields, it was impossible for the fleet to be in a battle state.

“Dark Star.....”

–Now's not the time to hesitate! It is the end if we're hit by a 2nd attack!

Irina's desperate voice was heard through the network. Then Hawk nodded and exclaimed.

–Ensign Irina is correct. Turn and get out of range before the Dark Star begins its secondary attack. I repeat. Check the damage later. Retreat at top speed!

The ships spouting fire started to retreat at Hawk's command. They ran away hundreds of thousands of kilometres so that the grey planet wasn't even visible.

–Damn! What now?

–We can't even approach the unidentified planet.

–I've heard a little bit about the Dark Star but I didn't realize it was like this. It is a perfect monster. It is impossible to fight against the Dark Star with the few battleships we have.

–How about attacking from different directions? We managed to get away after one attack so its reload speed is slow.

–But the Dark Star’s range is double ours. We’ll only be halfway there when the Dark Star will attack. At best only 5~6 ships will be able to access it. Even if the reloading speed is slow, will the remaining ships be able to win with their firepower? And who will be assaulted by the Dark Star first?

–Then do we need to ask for help from the galactic federation?

–Idiot! Why do you think the federation hired us?

–Why are you so angry?

–Because it sounds ridiculous!

The members started fighting among themselves over the power of the Dark Star. Hawk who had been thinking with his eyes closed suddenly lifted his head.

–There is a way.

“What? –You have a way?”

Ark flinched and raised his head.

There was no need to say but Ark was also worried. If they didn’t find a way to handle the Dark Star then Ark would also be stranded here. He had been thinking since they retreat but couldn’t come up with anything.

Yet Hawk confidently said that he found a way. Hawk laughed as he looked at Ark like Ark was his prey.

–Three days. The results will be shown in three days.

–The situation?

A man appeared on the flashing screen.

With a disgusting appearance and a few sizes larger than humans, he was an alien from the Tunba clan.

The man looking at the screen bowed his head and replied.

“Three days ago, more than 10 ships approached and ran away after being attacked by the Dark Star. They must’ve accidentally discovered our planet and ran away frightened. Please don’t worry about them.”

–This isn’t the time to relax.

“Huh? What?”

–I sent some agents to find Esut.

“Is Esut the Wolf clan smuggler that carried the cargo to our planet?”

–That’s right. Now we no longer need any more cargo brought in. And the 3 powers have sensed the antimatter energy and have sent intelligence agents to the frontier to find information. That’s why I sent people to look for Esut. A useless tool should go missing.

Rats need to be cleaned up.

So there won’t be any surprises. That’s why I initially thought about entrusting it to a non-pioneer. He has a disposable life and won’t resurrect at the Fairy.

“Then I guess we don’t need to worry.”

–No, the agents couldn’t find him.

“Huh? Then did he run away?”

–I’ll be glad if it was like that but....

The Tunba clan muttered in a low voice before shaking his head.

–That party that received an attack before disappearing. They might be intelligence agents sent from one of the 3 powers. If that’s true then those guys figuring out we’re here is only a matter of time. The fleet that emerged

three days ago might be them. If they are the intelligence agents from one of the 3 powers then they won't give up so easily. They might be preparing some countermeasures.

“Any measures against the Dark Star will be pointless. Even if they are from one of the 3 powers, they won't be able to approach a planet protected by the Dark Star.”

-I know. But you never know what will happen in the universe. A representative is coming to check your performance. So you can't relax.

“Don't worry. The Great God willing!”

-The Great God willing.

The Tunba disappeared from the screen. The man watching the screen sighed before smiling lightly.

“Our Lord is worried for no reason. Checking just because of the snooping of a few pioneers.”

He didn't understand the Lord's concerns.

The source of his confidence was the anti-spaceship Dark Star that he commanded. The Dark Star was equivalent to 50~60 battleships and was the galaxy's single strongest weapon.

The regular spaceships of pioneers from the 3 powers couldn't be an enemy for it. In other words, it could be called an invincible weapon on the space frontier.

Invincible! What a sweet word!

To be honest, he was secretly hoping that those guys from three days ago would reappear.

The Dark Star had been nestled in the planet's orbit for 1 year and had only been used 5 times. Yet those guys three days ago had fled as soon as the bombardment began. It was an invincible force but it couldn't be used.

Unlike his Lord, the soldier wasn't stressed about it.

"I want to see it fight properly at least once before leaving here....."

The man clicked his tongue and murmured.

"Captain-nim, a large object is approaching at a speed of 90,000 kilometres per hour!"

"What? A ship? The ones from the other day?"

"I will show it on the screen!"

A massive object then appeared on the screen. The man's face turned confused as he looked at the screen.

A meteorite had come up on the screen. A meteorite 3~4 times the size of the Dark Star was flying at a tremendous speed. Of course, seeing a meteorite in outer space wasn't uncommon. The problem was that the meteorite was aiming directly at the Dark Star.

"What the, this is?" All of a sudden....."

"The position of the meteorite's orbit exactly matches the Dark Star! At this pace it will collide with the Dark Star in exactly 10 minutes and 47 seconds! If we want to avoid it then we'll need to start right now!"

"Avoid it? Is that a joke?"

A captain snapped in a cold voice.

"Behind the Dark Star is the planet that contains the base of our organization. Do you know what will happen if a meteorite of that size hits the planet? The Dark Star is a shield to defend the base! Even if we need to collide with the meteorite! And there is no reason to give up. That is just a lump of rock. And we are on-board the Dark Star, the galaxy's ultimate weapon! Open all the guns on the Dark Star! Fire when the meteorite enters range and turn it into dust!"

“Prepare the guns to fire!”

The crew started moving busily. Dozens of barrels emerged from the outer wall of the Dark Star. There were 30 cannons that were the main gun of a general spaceship, 15 powerful warheads and 120 missiles. This was the firepower that would pour out of the Dark Star. The meteorite that was composed of rocks would turn to dust instantly after being fired upon by the Dark Star!

“The meteorite is entering our range!”

“Okay! All guns, fire!”

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa! Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Dozens of lights gushed out from the Dark Star. The Dark Star’s precision computer calculated the angle and speed of the meteorite and launched the missiles! The guns and missiles hit the meteorite without any errors. And it exploded!

The captain smirked with satisfaction as smoke and flames blew out into outer space. But that smirk didn’t last for even 10 seconds.

Hwakak!

Smoke rose from the meteorite! Despite being hit by all the guns and missiles, it only had a few scratches.

“What, what the? Why? The lump of stone withstood the attacks from the Dark Star?”

“Captain-nim, an energy reaction has been detected from the meteorite!”

“A shield has spread in front of the meteorite!”

“S-shield? Meteorite?”

The captain realized that something was wrong. But it was already too late.

The range of the Dark Star’s guns was approximately 5,000 kilometres. Due

to the overwhelming amount of energy required, it would take 2 minutes to reload. That's the reason why the ships from three days ago escaped. They ran away during the reload time. On the other hand, the meteorite was flying towards the Dark Star at 90,000 kilometres per hour!

‘Even if we recharge immediately, there is a high chance of a collision!’

Fortunately the last attack had destroyed 90% of the meteorite's shield. If they managed to attack one more time then the meteorite would surely shatter.

‘But if the meteorite doesn't smash then the Dark Star will be the one destroyed! The most powerful weapon in the universe will be shattered by something like a conflict with a meteorite? Not a chance! I have to smash it when the meteorite is close!’

“All guns and missiles of the Dark Star have been reloaded!”

“Wait! Not yet, not yet!”

The captain clenched his fist firmly as he stared at the approaching meteorite.

“The meteorite is 300 kilometres away! 250....200.....150.....Captain-nim!”

“Now! Fire!”

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa! Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Once again dozens of lights shot out! It was necessary to confirm on the screen as the meteorite was 100 kilometres away.

The sight of the guns and missiles hitting the meteorite could be seen on the other side of the window. And thick cracks spread on the meteorite's tattered shield before it shattered!

The scene of the meteorite shattering right in front of them was like it came from a 3D movie.

This was the captain's first mistake.

“The meteorite has been destroyed!”

“Meteorite debris is heading towards the Dark Star!”

Once again, the Dark Star had smashed the meteorite. However it hadn't turned to dust as the captain expected. The meteorite split into chunks of stone ranging from several kilometres to 100 kilometres in diameter.

This wouldn't have been a big problem if it had been smashed at the 5,000 kilometre range of the Dark Star. But the meteorite had exploded only 100 kilometres away from the Dark Star!

“I-it is colliding!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Hundreds of meteorite fragments struck the Dark Star. At the same time, lights flashed and the crew members cried out.

“More than 70% of the Dark Star's body armour has been damaged!”

“8 barrels and 9 missiles launches have been destroyed!”

“There is a fire in B, C, F and G blocks! The exterior walls of A block have been directly hit and many crew members sucked out through the hole into outer space! A partition to seal off the relevant block has been put up!”

The invincible Dark Star had become a wreck. This was the result of the captain's choice to shatter the meteorite as closely as possible. But that wasn't the captain's crucial mistake.

“A large number of energy has been detected from behind the meteorite!”

“E-energy?”

Blood drained from the captain's face as he looked. 14 ships could be seen through the dense smoke. The ships lined up facing the Dark Star and blue light started condensing.

“This.....a dream.....”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

At the same time, 14 streams of light were fired.

Ku ku ku ku! Pepeng! Ku ku ku kung!

14 ships floated in the orbit of the grey planet.

Dozens of kilometres away from them, the Dark Star emitted flames from a chain explosion.

-Your level has
risen!

-Your level has
risen.....

The messages subsequently rose. It was a welcome message that indicated the character's growth.

However Ark's face was stiff as he stared at the windows. Once again, Hawk was the reason why it took three days to process the Dark Star.

Over the past three days, Hawk had sailed around searching for an asteroid of the appropriate size and placed a jet device on it. The members would hide behind the meteorite while a shield was expanded in front of it.

‘The method itself is simple. Simple but.....’

The idea of moving an entire asteroid wasn't something that anyone could do. It might seem simple but it actually wasn't that easy.

Even if the appropriate jet devices were equipped, it wasn't easy to move it on the correct orbit. He precisely calculated the reload speed of the Dark Star, the asteroid's movement speed and the psychology of the captain.

The strategy was called the Great Meteor Strike!

Rapid looked at the flaming Dark Star and whistled.

“The Dark Star is a monster but Hawk is also a monster. I guess he isn’t one of the Seven Swords for nothing? Hey, are you okay? Your enemy is someone powerful like that.”

“It’s not like I wanted it.”

Ark replied in a curt voice.

“And I’m not surprised because Hawk sunk the Dark Star.”

“No? Then what is it?”

“Do you have to ask? How much do you think the jet device to move the asteroid costs? A large ship’s engine! It would be worth thousands of gold! I can’t believe it! Even if it is the Dark Star, I can’t believe he poured thousands of gold into winning one battle! He is a crazy bastard! Damn, now I know! Why that guy is blindly hostile towards me. That guy is just crazy! How could he do such a thing?”

“.....Are you really saying that?”

Rapid asked with an astounded voice. But Ark was 90% serious. Ark disliked someone like Hawk who would spend thousands of gold so easily. That was because they won’t be easily smashed when he stepped on them.

However Ark was also persistent.

‘If I shrunk back from money then I wouldn’t have started the game! I’ll show them that I don’t need money to climb up! Now it is a fight!’

-The Dark Star has sunk! Fleet, enter the planet.

Then Hawk’s voice was heard.

“Okay, Tori! Enter the atmosphere. Now is the time to show our strength!”

Ark shouted as he turned his head towards the grey planet.

At the End of the March

The situation proceeded once the Dark Star was sunk.

The 14 ships entered the atmosphere of the grey plane and detected a secret base hidden under the ground with their optical scanners.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Once the spaceships gathered in that area, shells immediately flew up. They were anti-aircraft guns. But there weren't a lot of anti-aircraft guns around the base. The greatest defense weapon had been the Dark Star in orbit around the planet. They never imagined that the Dark Star would be sunk so they hadn't installed many anti-aircraft guns.

And that carelessness caused trouble.

—Sweep them up.

Hawk ordered with short words.

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa! Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

At that moment, 14 ships fired bright flashes towards the base.

It was like a war between a pea shooter and a cannon. Thanks to the Meteor Strike strategy, the spaceships had sunk the Dark Star with almost no damage. The anti-aircraft shells couldn't penetrate the full-powered shields. However, the blasts from the sky destroyed the anti-aircraft guns!

Once the anti-aircraft guns were neutralized, the ships landed in front of the base. And soldiers flowed outside. It hadn't been 1 hour since the Dark Star was sunk so 400 people had gathered at the square in front of the base.

“Put it in order. The goal of this mission isn't to take care of the enemy but to gather information. I don't think this is the home base of Organization X. However, it is one of their strongholds and will contain information about

Organization X. Therefore all passages will be sealed to block the escape of key figures and we need to quickly subdue them. The optical scanners have identified 7 passages in the base. 7 balanced teams will be organized in order to capture the 7 passages at the same time.”

The member with the most subordinates was naturally Hawk. Hawk had brought extra subordinates from Turan for this mission and had 50 people. Irina and 40 people from the 1st investigation team also joined. That’s why Hawk and Irina respectively would take one passage each.

The remaining members were organized to form 5 sets of 50 people. However it wasn’t even. Ark was screwed over.

Ark was combined with Ferguson’s team who only had 12 people so theirs was the smallest team. Excluding Tori, Ark had 15 members. Hawk had tied the two teams with the least people together.

“Isn’t there something wrong about this?”

Irina was one of the people who objected.

“Ark-nim and Ferguson-nim only have 27 people in their group.”

“It was fairly put together.”

“How is this fair when they have half the amount of troops?”

“Irina-nim really doesn’t understand Ark that well. Ark has received the title of Hero in the Bellin constellation. Despite becoming lost on his first mission, he knew about Esut and single-handedly captured him on Maseti. Don’t you think it is fair that I treat him differently from the other members? And.....”

Hawk’s eyes turned to Ferguson. Ferguson’s expression showed that he was also unhappy with Hawk’s decision. Hawk reached out and lay a hand on Ferguson’s shoulder.

“Ferguson is an amazing member. I heard that he once ranked 18th in the list

of top users. He might've only brought 10 people but they will be equivalent to the standard of 20~30 people. Ferguson has that type of ability. Isn't that right, Ferguson?"

"Huh? Ah! Yes!"

Ferguson nodded quickly.

"In fact, our team alone will be sufficient. I'm Ferguson!"

He looked at Ark's team standing near him and shouted.

....Idiot! He is an idiot! Ark knew why Ferguson and Brothers A and B only brought 10 members.

According to the words of an informed Mario, Ferguson had once been rich. However he was attacked by space pirates not long ago and lost his spaceship and riches. Fortunately, the insurance compensation meant he received back 80% of the ship's price. His original 3rd grade spaceship like Ark's was downgraded to a 2nd grade ship. All his employees died then so this time Ferguson brought mercenaries. The down payment of 3,000 gold meant he could only employ 10 people.

'Well, he should have some skills if he managed to reach rank 18....'

At the very least, Ferguson's team should have some skills. Nevertheless, Ferguson's mood had been uplifted by Hawk. But Hawk was clearly not interested in Ferguson's skills.

"Those two are tied together. Shouldn't their power be sufficient to overcome their numbers?"

Hawk said as he sent a provocative look to Ark.

"But....."

"Ensign Irina-nim, it is fine."

Ark restrained Irina and shook his head.

‘That Hawk bastard, he is surprisingly petty. Is he going to act like this?’

After their meeting in Maseti, Hawk no longer bothered to hide his hostility towards Ark. Hawk was aiming a knife at the back of Ark’s head while Ark was aiming one behind Hawk. From now on Hawk would take every chance to tackle Ark. This tackle was nothing.

‘This is just the beginning. And Hawk doesn’t expect that I’ll have that much trouble. This is a type of notice. He will continue to spite me from now on.’

But he had already prepared for a hostile relationship with Hawk. Ark wouldn’t be able to avoid it as long as Hawk was the leader of the investigation team. It would be useless for him to question it. Anyway, he didn’t want Irina to raise questions by standing up for him.

‘Having the relationship between Irina-nim and I is useful right now. Irina-nim is directly related to the galactic federation so Hawk will need to keep close to her. I was expelled and returned so the other members might be dissatisfied. They might think that I took advantage of my position and status. But I don’t have to worry with Irina-nim close to Hawk!’

This was why he hid his relationship with Irina. It would be more difficult if Hawk knew that they were in a relationship. So she shouldn’t question Hawk about this.

When he thought about it, he also felt sorry for Ferguson. Ferguson got involved in the problem between Ark and Hawk. He was the smallest team so he got involved in Ark and Hawk’s war for no reason. However.....

“Hahahaha! How about it Ark? Ark. Yes, Ark. Huhuhu! I guess you’ve also heard of my fame. Yes, Ark! Believe in me. I will show you the skills of the 18th ranked user. So don’t worry and just follow me. I’ll protect you Ark!”

Ferguson continued making noise.

.....He didn’t feel any compassion.

‘Moreover, why does he keep on saying the name Ark like that?’

....He was getting annoyed.

“That’s good, Ark. You’re going to be protected by your colleagues.”

Hawk smiled at Ark before turning around and shouting.

“There’s no time. The key to a surprise attack is speed! Don’t give them time to think! Each team will enter the passage and exterminate the enemy! If there is danger then use the communicator! Advance!”

“Let’s go! Advance!”

And hundreds of soldiers advanced towards the base.

“Wah! Wah! Wah!”

A man burst out screaming. The man was a Tunba called Jamal in charge of managing the secret base on the grey planet. Being responsible for a secret base was an important role in the organization. Jamal worked hard for the past few years and was promoted. But then a problem occurred.

Dark Star!

The weapon defending the grey planet was sunk.

“Damn bastards! I told them many times not to relax! They made things horrible! Shoot them, shoot!”

But the captain of the Dark Star had already died. And the mystery forces that destroyed the Dark Star was now invading the base.

“Stop them! Use every method you have to stop them!”

Jamal shouted in an urgent voice. But most of the base’s troops were gathered in the Dark Star. The base wouldn’t be attacked unless the Dark Star collapsed so they concentrated all their firepower on the Dark Star. There were only workers and Kero clan warriors remaining at the base. Well, they

still numbered in the thousands.....

“The 1st defense line has fallen!”

“The enemy has entered the facility!”

“The partition walls are being destroyed one by one by the enemy’s engineers!”

“The 14th unit of Kero clan soldiers have been wiped out in 3 minutes! The 3rd passage only has a few turrets left!”

“I can’t forgive those tadpoles!”

Jamal shouted angrily.

It was natural. The frogs defending the base didn’t have great abilities. Their intelligence was low and they just shot the guns wildly while rushing. It was useful when using a human wave tactic but not when enemy troops were entering the base. They were smashed every time they encountered the enemy.

Jamal could see dozens of dead frogs on his monitors. And the unidentified pioneers that sometimes approached the corpses!

“I have to find another way.....!”

“I was one step too late.”

Then he heard someone’s voice near him. Jamal flinched and turned around. 5 people were drawing close to Jamal. They were black hoods that didn’t show their faces and the skin between the collar seemed to be tinged black.

However, the one who talked just then had white skin like a human. Jamal immediately shed tears as he saw him.

“A-Agent-nim, you came!”

“This is a difficult situation.”

“Huh? Yes! A-as you can see! That stupid captain! He blew the whole thing! I told him many times not to relax! Now I’m desperately trying to block them but....”

“Quiet.”

The man placed a finger to his lips and whispered before looking at the monitor. A small smile formed as he saw the investigation team slaughtering the frogs in each passage. It was the type of smile like a cat catching a mouse. However the man erased his expression before turning back to Jamal.

“I will now deliver some commands.”

“This really.....”

Ark scratched his head.

–Now is the time to show our strength!

Ark had said that as he entered the grey planet. He thought about showing 120% of his ability in a hot battle. But the opponent he wanted to show his strength to wasn’t here.

Hawk. Ark had wanted to show his power to Hawk. Hawk had developed the Meteor Strike so Ark wasn’t to show that he wasn’t too daunted by Hawk.

Yet they had been divided into teams.

‘There is no reason for me to fight.’

So Ark thought about it. He entered a different passage but the members would all rendezvous in the centre. Naturally the enemy’s resistance would be the greatest there.

‘In this situation, the only way to resist is to concentrate the troops in the centre. The units are entering 7 different passages so their speed would depend on the enemy’s combat strength and resistance. There is just one

problem. It will be difficult to penetrate such numbers with overwhelming power. The members' stamina will also fall as we move towards the centre. It is highly likely that there will be a prolonged battle in the centre.'

So there was no reason to rush. Of course, the unit that captured the centre first would receive the highest achievements. But there was no guarantee he could occupy the centre if he arrived their first. No, if he arrived first then he would just receive the most damage.

'Yes, now isn't the time to hurry. The important thing is to maintain my power while advancing to the centre. It might be beneficial to reach the centre last. So I need to avoid as much fighting as possible to conserve my strength.'

That was the conclusion Ark reached. He won't consume his power before arriving at the centre. Then Ark would take care of the hordes of frog the members who arrived first would be struggling with and gobble up all the achievements.

Of course it wasn't as easy as it sounded. Ark's passage also had frogs flooding it. They just fired machine guns and RPGS blindly but it was a narrow damage so he would receive damage. However.....

"That's wonderful, Ferguson-nim!"

Ark raised his thumb and exclaimed. Then Ferguson who was wearing a thick armour burst out laughing.

"Hahahaha! Yes? Isn't that right Ark? Huhuhuhu! Am I cool?"

"Yes! I can only believe in Ferguson-nim!"

"Yes! Trust me Ark! I will protect you! Let's go!"

Ferguson moved in front of Ark and fired bullets down the passage. He moved with incredible speed for someone wearing such thick armour. Ferguson fired a revolver launcher that flew tens of metres in

seconds.

Tung! Tung! Tung! Tung!

There was a ringing sound as a barricade fell. Fire surged from the barricade and a swarm of frogs rushed out to avoid dying. Brothers A and B holding shields and swords followed behind Ferguson.

“Now! Follow your Hyung-nim! Full force assault!”

An intense hand-to-hand combat followed!

‘User ranked 18th....he definitely has significant combat power but....’

Ark laughed as he watched the scene from behind. Ferguson was a suitable figure to be ranked 18th. No, his skills were the same level as Ark but his equipment was really excellent. And Brothers A and B might be ordinary compared to Ferguson but their equipment was significant. They were indeed suitable to be chosen for the investigation team. But Ferguson had a fatal weakness.

‘.....They are really simple guys.’

He has sensed it when Hawk quickly settled their complaints.

‘This guy has the intelligence of an ape. I just need to throw bananas at him. That Hawk bastard, he sensed their intelligence and sent monkeys to accompany me!’

Ark had already set up his own plan. He would minimize the damage while marching to the centre. Ark could set up such a plan thanks to Ferguson, A and B.

“That’s wonderful, Ferguson-nim!”

“Hahahaha! Yes, only believe in me Ark!”

“Wow! That great power! That great power! It is to the extent that I can’t imitate it!”

“Hihihihhi! Really? Is that so? Okay Ark! Praise me more! More praise!”

He continued cheering as Ferguson fired bullets and threw grenades towards the frogs. Rapid scratched his head as he watched the scene.

“Ark, is this really okay?”

“Why? The party is still receiving experience.”

Ark answered with a smirk, causing Melina to sigh.

“No, it isn’t a complaint.....those people, they seem slightly pitiful for some reason.....”

“Oh, was that it? It is your imagination. It is like visitors to a zoo thinking that the monkeys are pitiful. Meanwhile the monkeys won’t care as long as you give them bananas. No, wouldn’t the monkeys be happier at the sight of the visitors? The same is true with these guys. Look Melina-nim. He has become dramatically happier.”

“Too pitiful! Those guys, they are really pitiful!”

Ark’s team unanimously sympathized with Ferguson after hearing Ark’s explanation. However Ark’s words were true.

Ferguson was crazy in the head!

‘Hahahaha! This feels good! It is exciting!’

Right now endorphins were rushing in Ferguson’s head. It was thanks to Ark passionately cheering from behind.

‘Right now it doesn’t matter if Ark from New World appears in front of me. Yes, Ark should always be cheering me from behind like A and B. I was exploited like a pig. But now my position has changed. Now I’m stronger than this guy! Of course, he isn’t the one from New World but Ark is still Ark! Huhuhu! That Ark bastard is surprised and praising my strength! This is great! This is what I’ve been dreaming of!’

It was the dream from his time in New World! However, it was an insurmountable reality and he had to give up on the dream! That dream was finally being made into a reality in this place.

-You have been damaged by the enemy's bullet!

“Hahaha! Don't worry about it!”

It wasn't possible to stop the Ferguson hyped up on endorphins.

“H-Hyung-nim, I'm tired. There aren't any places where I can penetrate a hole.”

“Doesn't it seem like we're the only ones suffering for some reason?”

“I don't want to hear your weak voices! Do you think this opportunity will come easily? Now is the time to show our strength to Ark! Throw out your chest proudly! We are the heroes!”

Ferguson once again rushed forward. And when he turned around quickly.....

“Wow! That's wonderful!”

“Cool person! Cool! Beep! Beep!”

Ferguson would hear Ark's cheers! This gave Ferguson the energy to annihilate the enemy.

“It has been cleaned up. Shall we go?”

Ark's team members followed slowly.

“Hey, the liquor sold on Maseti was unbelievably good. In addition, there is the rice wine for drinking games. It is a little expensive but it is the best for parties.

“Isn't it? Isn't it? If we drop in there again then we should fill the Silver Star's warehouse with boxes of them.

“But the appetizers were a little lacking.”

“They are also unbelievably expensive. Space food is cheap so there is no need to worry about dying of starvation. We don’t need to go to a large hive or port.”

“Yes. Then we will find some dinner and drink.”

And they even gossiped together.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepeng! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Gunshots resounded through the passage.

-Your level has
risen.

After a while, a wonderful message rose.

Kwa kwang!

The thick iron door shattered and the pieces scattered all over the place. At the same time, dozens of guys poured out of the smoke. A man wearing a cloak with a blue skull and carrying a giant hammer and laser gun with scope walked forward.

“Damn.....”

Hawk also looked around with one eye.

In fact, Hawk entered the base with a similar plan to Ark. If he was the commander of the base then he would install roadblocks in order to gather troops at the centre for a decisive battle. He anticipated that the one who arrived first would receive the most damage. But Hawk didn’t have a reason to create a slow pace.

‘Only a loser would use that method!’

Hawk and his subordinates weren't weak so they smashed the frogs. If he applied his standards to the frogs then they would be disqualified to become his subordinates. There was no way they could stop him.

And Hawk was the leader of the investigation team so he didn't want to be later than any of the other members.

'If they gather a lot then I'll just have to destroy them!'

Thus he marched on without a hitch!

Hawk was the first one to arrive at the centre of the base. However Hawk's expectation was off the mark. The passages in front of the centre weren't swarming with frogs. Only the firmly closed doors were in front of him.

'What is going on? Did they place all the Kero into the passages? No way. Even if it is to stop the enemy, how can they leave the centre unprotected? It is impossible. Then.....'

"Holy shit! Harley, blow up the door!"

Hawk shouted with a displeased expression. And the professional engineers blew up the door to the central control room! Hawk cursed as he looked around the room.

"Dammit, it was like I expected."

The control room contained 10 people. The huge frame of the Tunba Commander could be seen. However, they were all dead. This was the reason why the frogs weren't gathered at the centre. The commander gave an order before dying. The computers in the command room were shattered.

"Did they commit suicide once cornered?"

"We need to check the information first. There is no doubt that this is the secret base of Organization X. The ones in charge are all dead but we might be able to find some information about the organization from the computers. Erin, Sion, confirm whether any data can still be extracted from the

computer!”

“Understood!”

The engineers Erin and Sion ran to the computers. Meanwhile Hawk and Harley started to search the corpses. He needed to confirm if there was any clues left behind. But he found something different. He figured out that their deaths weren’t suicides. Based on the similar wounds, they were clearly murdered by one person.

‘Who the hell did this? The 10 people possess the same wounds so a 3rd person must’ve killed them. Where on earth did they go? Haven’t all the passages been blocked by the team units?’

“Captain-nim, there is something here.”

Harley who was searching the Tunba spoke to Hawk. The Tunba had died in his chair. Harley pointed to where the Tunba was sitting in the chair. There were letters made of blood above the upper body of the Tunba!

“What? These letters are? What on earth.....?”

“Captain-nim, it is serious!”

At that time, Erin who was searching the computer cried out.

‘What?’

Ark looked around with a confused expression. Thanks to the monkey Ferguson wandering around on endorphins, Ark just needed to stay behind and sometimes shoot so it was a relaxing experience. And he was expecting to interrupt the other units in a fierce battle.....

“What? There is no one here?”

He couldn’t even see a shadow of the other team units. He thought they would come really quickly but he couldn’t find any traces of them. There also

weren't any frogs wandering around. And the pieces of the door were scattered around.

Rapid looked around with a frown before asking.

“Perhaps the other units have already gone somewhere else?”

“But there are no frog corpses. And look. Do you see any bullet marks in the vicinity? The only thing broken is the door. That means there wasn't a battle here.”

“Then should we check with the other units?”

“No, let's confirm inside first.”

The situation became even more mysterious as they entered the control room. The 10 bodies of the commander and workers were scattered around. Rapid went around checking the corpses with Ark.

“They have all suffered injuries from one person.”

“So somebody murdered them.....what on earth happened? The team units are gone? Or is there someone else? Have the other teams already confirmed the situation and gone back?”

Then the letters written above the Tunba's body caught his eye. The letters written with blood!

-I shall be the wolf that swallows your god!

“What is this? What code is it?”

-Ark-nim, where are you now?

Then his Nympe vibrated and Irina's voice was heard. Irina normally refrained from individual communication so Ark didn't know why she was doing this now.

“Irina-nim? Did something happen?”

-Did something happen? Stop talking! The members have already gathered

in the central passage. But I didn't see Ark-nim so I made contact.

“The members are gathered in the central passage? Why?”

-Why....surely you received the notification?

“Notification? What notification?”

–Oh my god! Really.....no, we'll talk about it later. If you haven't received the notification then return to your ship immediately. You're running out of time. Hawk was the first one to arrive in the control room. When Hawk arrived he said that everyone in the control room had already been killed. There is nothing to obtain. And in a little while....

“Hyung-nim, it is serious!”

Hegel who was on the computed suddenly screamed.

“The base's self-destruct mechanism has been activated! And according to the message, a detonation device is also attached to the core of the planet. If we're on this base when it explodes.....”

-.....The planet will explode!

Kwa kwang! Kwa kwang! Kwa kwang! Kwa kwang! Kwa kwang! Kwa kwang!

A roar was heard after Irina's words. Ark's face darkened as he turned his head. It wasn't because the base was going to explode. A different situation had occurred.

The explosion had happened in the passage Ark crossed just now. There was a cascade of explosions as the walls and ceiling collapsed to completely seal off the control room.

One name and face popped into his head.

‘.....Hawk!’

All his questions were answered in that moment.

Hawk was the first one to arrive in the control room. He didn't know if Hawk killed the people here but he learnt that the base's self-destruct mechanism has been activated like Hegel. He organized a rendezvous with the other members in the central passage. But he didn't announce this fact to Ark and Ferguson. It wasn't necessary to consider the reason. He decided to deal with Ark in the base. Therefore he installed a bomb in the passages.

Hawk, that damn bastard!

Perhaps he even started the self-destruct process on the computer in order to make a booby trap for Ark. However it was too late by the time he found out. The bombs already worked and Ark was trapped in the control room.

–Explosion? Ark-nim, are you still in a fight?

“I'll contact you later!”

Ark broke the communication and ran over to Hegel at the computer.

-The self-destruct process has been started at the atomic reactor in the planet's core.

<Time remaining: 16 minutes 30 seconds.....>

That message floated on the monitor! Just one look made it obvious how serious the situation was. Even the font used seriously scared him!

“Hegel, can you stop it?”

“I checked but it is impossible! Once it starts then the program can't be stopped!”

“How about smashing the computer?”

“The program has already entered into the atomic reactor!”

“So do we have no choice but to penetrate that passage?”

Ark glanced at the shattered passage.

“Hahahaha! My power is required at times like this. Get out of the way! Get out of the way! I will penetrate through that passage with my body! Now Ark, praise me! I am the person who will save you! Armour armament!”

Ferguson suddenly pushed to the front! Ferguson shouted like a hero as a metal cube sprung out of his bag. It twisted in complicated ways and armour was fitted onto Ferguson’s body. But Ferguson’s transformation didn’t end there.

“Solid Armour!”

Ferguson shouted once again after the battle suit was equipped.

Then another metal cube shot out and covered Ferguson. Solid Armour was a special form that overlapped over a battle suit. But it added to a person’s abilities in the same way a battle suit did! However it was difficult to control and balance so it couldn’t be utilized that much.

Most people would rather upgrade the traditional battle suit than buy Solid Armour. A person couldn’t be shot in the head when wearing Solid Armour so quite a few people liked it!

Ferguson had Solid Armour! He just stupidly spent money.....

“Ohhh! How wonderful! Please show me your power!”

“I’ll show you! Open Solid Armour, open warheads! Target set! Launch!”

Hwaaaaack!

Ferguson launched warheads from his Solid Armour! Dozens of small missiles exploded from his armour. There was a tremendous shake as the warheads hit. And.....

More cracks spread through the walls and ceilings of the surrounding passages. That is to say.....

The Solid Armour was too strong.

“U-unbelievable!”

Ferguson stuttered as he sat down.

The battle suit and Solid Armour peeled off him like a balloon popping. Slayer, Leon, Kaya etc. looked at Ferguson with cold eyes after seeing the pathetic results. And then they all started crying out.

“You’re dumber than a monkey!”

“Stupid child who can’t control their power!”

“Is this a joke? Aren’t we even more blocked in now?”

But Ark had no time to curse Ferguson.

Thanks to Ferguson, the whole ceiling was crumbling. And there was only 12 minutes remaining until the explosion. It would be impossible for the Royal Guards and other members to punch through the blocked passage in 12 minutes. It was impossible to escape from the base.

.....Wiped out!

Only those two words floated in Ark’s mind.

‘No, no! I can’t die! If I die here then Hawk will use it as an excuse to expel me from the investigation team. He didn’t start a fight just to be expelled in this way. No, I have to use whatever it takes to escape! Using every possible method!’

Ark shook his head forcefully. Then something came to his head.

“Has everybody escaped?”

Hawk turned and shouted.

“Yes, we’ve all escaped! It is really great. If Hawk-nim hadn’t told us about the self-destruct mechanism then we would still be on the base!”

“It is still too early to be assured. An atomic reactor is connected to the core of the planet. If the atomic reactor explodes then a planet of this size will collapse from the inside. We have to escape from the planet before that happens!”

“We already know. Let’s go!”

The team members rushed back to their ship. Then Irina who had been looking at the base shouted in a desperate voice.

“W-wait a minute! Ark-nim hasn’t come out yet! He might be in a situation where he needs help!”

“I said it when the members previously gathered on Turan. Every person is responsible for themselves. If someone disturbs the success of the mission then I will mercilessly throw them away. I have no intention of withdrawing those words. I’m only responsible for informing you about the base’s self-destruct mechanism. I don’t know if Ark didn’t hear properly or there were other problems with his communication but I can’t let him hold us back.”

“But Ark-nim.....”

Irina suddenly flinched and closed her mouth. She swallowed violently before starting to talk again.

“Are you going to desert a colleague?”

“Then do you want to die together?”

Hawk laughed as he gazed at Irina with keen eyes.

“Isn’t Ensign Irina-nim the same? I understood that Ensign-nim thinks of your colleagues as important. But isn’t Ark just a fellow colleague? Aren’t the subordinates following Ensign-nim also colleagues? Ensign-nim’s stubbornness might cause your subordinates to be in trouble. I’m the same. I also have subordinates.”

Hawk led his people and entered the Death Knight. He sat in the captain’s

chair and said in a cold voice.

“That female.”

Someone had told Ark information about Esut. Hawk didn't believe that Ark had found it out by himself. Obviously someone had given the information to Ark. That person needed to have a close relationship with Ark. That was the reason Hawk announced about the self-destruct device after gathering everyone in the central passage.

He had indeed lured Ark to the control room. At this stage he still didn't know who had a close relationship with Ark. But now it had become clear. The other members failed to even notice Ark hadn't joined them once the situation became urgent. The only person who noticed this fact was Irina! Now all the members had boarded their spaceships.

“But.....”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

There was a roaring sound and a pillar of flames gushed out from the base. The pillar of flames emerged one after another from the ground like worms. The explosion was occurred in the underground passages of the base. Once the whole area became a sea of fire, the land vibrated and was sucked inwards.

“A huge gravitational field is forming under the planet's crust! The gravitational field is continuing to increase! In this state the planet will be extinct in a few minutes and will form a black hole! If we don't get more than 100,000 kilometres away then we'll be caught in the black hole!”

The destruction of the planet had started.

“.....It is over.”

Hawk smiled and muttered. Irina was still staring at the base.

However her subordinates pulled her so she turned and ran towards her ship.

She also judged that Ark was already dead. Hawk smiled warmly as he made the Death Knight take off. Then Harley who was watching the monitor shouted.

“C-Captain-nim, look over there!”

Hawk turned with a deep frown. Harley was pointing to the opposite direction of the base’s collapse where people were running. And the person in the lead.....

“Ark?”

‘I wasn’t too late!’

Ark sighed with relief as he looked behind him. The land had collapsed immediately afterwards! And a reckless amount of energy was swirling! The sight was enough to cause sweat to drip down his spine.

‘If I hadn’t thought about that....!’

He desperately came up with something when trapped in the control room! The bodies of the 10 corpses in the control room floated to Ark’s head.

‘Irina said that they were already dead when Hawk arrived. And the bodies were all slain. Someone entered the control room and killed them. But all the passages had been occupied by the team. In such a situation, there is only one way to escape the control room without being caught!’

A secret passage. He could only think that a secret passage was hidden somewhere. Ark had the crazy idea and immediately rallied everyone to search the control room. And.....bingo!

There was an iron griddle on the floor. Originally the iron was tightly meshed together. Ark probably wouldn’t have been able to find it easily if it was still in that state. However Ferguson’s tremendous firepower caused the room to shake and reveal it. He might question it but Ferguson was useful sometimes.

“There’s no time left!”

Ark ran straight out the secret passage. Thanks to that, they were barely able to escape the explosion. The secret passage led in the opposite direction of the ships so there was quite a distance to run. Ark ran towards the airfield until he felt like he was going to collapse. And the members finally started to board the Silver Star.

“Tori, quickly make the Silver Star take off!”

“U-understood!”

Tori grabbed the joystick quickly.

There was an explosion at the base so Tori had already prepared the Silver Star to take off. Fortunately they didn’t have to go through the preparation process. The Silver Star launched into the air at his command. It ascended vertically after the other ships. And there was a violent vibration just as they were about to exit the atmosphere.

Ku ku ku ku! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

It was an explosion from behind that transcended imagination!

Cracks were spreading on the surface of the grey planet. At the same time, a huge energy storm shook the Silver Star. But the more fearful situation occurred after that.

A hold was forming in the centre of the planet and sucking everything into it. And it became a huge black hole!

At that moment, the spaceship stopped like it was caught by an invisible hand. The black hole was producing a tremendous pulling force.

Hegel who was manipulating the dashboard screamed.

“H-Hyung-nim, we’re being sucked in!”

“Damn! Tori, raise the engine to its maximum output!”

“Yes! Yes! Engine output is increasing!”

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

Flashes occurred at the rear of the Silver Star at the same time as Tori’s reply. The Silver Star that was stopped started to move forward again. Once the Silver Star entered space, Irina immediately popped up on a screen.

-Ark-nim, you’re alive!

“I’m not that easy to kill.”

Ark finally began to relax as he smiled and answered. Then Hegel who had been looking at the dashboard started shouting again.

“A ship is approaching!”

“Ship? What?”

“This identification signal is Death Knight! It is Hawk’s battleship! The Death Knight is approaching the bottom of the Silver Star! The distance is just 50 metres! If it keeps approaching then we will collide with it!”

“Is that bastard crazy? Why all of a sudden.....?”

Ark jumped up and shouted. A battleship loomed in the front window. Hawk’s Death Knight was approaching the Silver Star. And when the Death Knight was dozens of metres away!

Hwaaaaack!

A flash came from the rear of the Death Knight! The Silver Star vibrated as it was engulfed with flames. The Death Knight that had come close blew the Silver Star back with a tremendous air current. Of course, the attack itself didn’t do any apparent damage. However, the ship was pushed back by the turbulence and was caught in the pull.

“We’re caught by the gravity of the black hole!”

“Hawk, he is like this until the end!”

Ark shouted angrily at Tori's words.

They were once again caught by the black hole that they barely escaped. And the Silver Star's engine was already at its maximum output. That meant there was no way to escape now. Then a new window was created and Hawk's face popped up.

–Hrmm, I'm sorry. I lost control thanks to the gravitational field of the black hole and accidentally damaged you. I apologize. But a person can't be blamed for things they unintentionally did in an emergency situation. It is my fault for not searching the area and seeing your ship.

“Then I'll apologize in advance.”

-What?

“Tori, it is time to test it! Target is the Death Knight! Launch!”

Ark smiled and shouted. The armour of the Silver Star split to the sides and chains shot out.

This was what Ark meant! It was something that came with Tori's container box.

Ark had an idea after being caught by the Red Slaughterer's ship on Impeltus.

-This is money!

It wasn't uncommon for ships to fight amongst themselves on the frontier. But if they fought with bombardment then the chances of the ship being damaged was high. The crew and cargo would be lost if the ship exploded. Even if they won the battle, the cost of repairing the spaceship would be tremendous.

Therefore most people preferred hand-to-hand combat. They would capture the enemy ships with stingers and paralyze the electronics with radio waves. Then soldiers would board the enemy ship to make them surrender.

This was the way to minimize damage to the ship and increase profit. Of

course, that was the worst situation for merchants like Mario but pioneers with confidence in fighting preferred that method.

So Ark had requested an anchor launcher for the Silver Star along with Tori. Good quality equipment was bought from Tatuine and home delivered with Tori's container box. It was then mounted when the Silver Star was on E-2036.

Kwa kwak! Kwa kwak! Kwa kwak! Kwa kwak!

The anchor fired at the Death Knight that was only hundreds of metres from them. Now Hawk started to grasp the situation.

–You bastard! What are you doing?

“I'm grasping at straws to survive. That's what you did. Didn't you say a person couldn't be blamed for things they unintentionally do in an emergency situation? Then wouldn't that apply to me as well? Now choose. Die with me? Or live with me? The radio wave propagation is starting now.”

–You.....

Hawk glared at Ark. But he already had no choice now that the anchor was lodged. There was a black hole so it was impossible for soldiers to go out and cut the anchor. If they didn't want to die then they needed to pull the Silver Star out of the gravitational field

–Increase the Death Knight's engine to its maximum output!

The Silver Star and Death Knight started moving forward again.

Kwa kwak! Kwa kwak! Kwa kwak! Kwa kwak!

The ship shook and an anchor was driven into the Silver Star. At the same time, a new screen emerged next to Hawk's face.

–Ark! You bastard, you relaxed all day at the base only to strand me here? I have a 2nd grade ship so my engine output is weak! Look! I won't be able to live if another ship is destroyed! Save me!

–Please save us! I will even call you Ark-nim from now on!

–Please!

The faces of three men crying appeared on the small screen. They were Ferguson and his brothers A and B. No, it didn't matter who they were.

The problem was that Ferguson's anchor was lodged in the Silver Star! The Death Knight was a higher rated battleship than the Silver Star but even it couldn't pull 2 ships caught by a black hole's gravity.

Of course the three spaceships retreated! Retreat! Retreat!

–Damn! Let go Ark! I'm telling you!"

"Didn't you hear me? F-Ferguson!"

–You're the one who did this! You bastard!

"Look! You made Hawk made! So please let go, Ferguson!"

-I don't want to! I don't want to! I don't want to die! I won't die! So pull me out as well.

"Didn't you hear? Hawk! I'm being pulled inside! Just the spare fuel to thrust your engine! Go! Go! Go!"

–This bastard! Do you think I can escape from the black hold with two ships hanging from me.

So Hawk, Ark and Ferguson and their three spaceships were swallowed by the black hole together. And.....

TO BE CONTINUED